

SOUTH AFRICAN

COUNTRY LIFE

THE REAL HEART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

APRIL
2015

Adventure time in STUTTERHEIM

Book Heaven
comes to
Franschhoek

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chef of the year
Chantel Dartnall

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of countryside

Strange life
of a KAROO
GRAVEYARD



The making of
MAPUNGUBWE

10 Hikes
around
Durban +
9 Tented
getaways

Down on the Farm

- * Sheep shearing at Kersefontein
- * The Power of Percheron
- * Heirloom apples in the gardens of Elgin



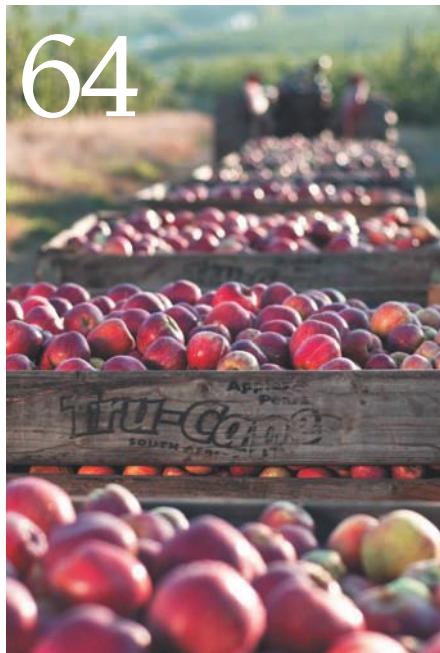
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EDITOR'S CHOICE Down on the farm this month we find farmers getting back to basics and preserving age-old traditions so integral to this country's heritage – think non-electric sheep shearing, growing heirloom apples, and breeding giant carthorses to work on farms. At Kersfontein in the Karoo, contract sheep shearers swear by the hand method and are



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such masters of the craft they're the reigning world champions. And talk about getting back to our roots – in an heirloom apple orchard in Elgin, heritage trees are being propagated from the stock of a *wijnappel*, first planted by Van Riebeeck on his arrival in the Cape. Perhaps we'll soon see the huge Percherons of Klein Brak carting the apples to market.

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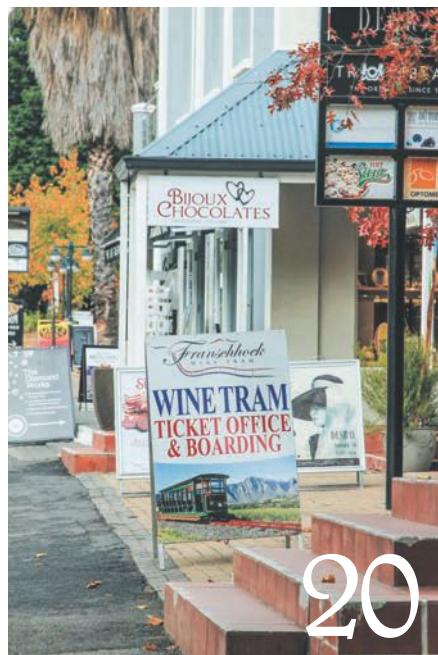
ON THE COVER

In our cover photograph by Anita de Villiers, Julian Melck of Kersfontein farm in the Sandveld tallies the wool bales after a day of traditional sheep shearing. Coty keeps him company. See our story *Blade Runners* on page 26.



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We are not in a good place. The collective psyche is more negative than it has been in a long time and everyone is just plain gatvol. And we have reason – and the right – to complain; to gripe about load shedding, the embarrassing behaviour of parliamentarians, the cancer of corruption, the idiocy of politicians and the general incompetence of officials. We cry for our beloved country.

Then you listen to someone like Angel Jones, founder of the Homecoming Revolution, who has the challenging task of convincing South Africans abroad to come home to invest their talents in this country. “For every skilled person that comes home, nine jobs are created in the informal and formal sector,” she says. “So engineers come home and build our power stations, doctors come and fix our health system, teachers come upskill our youth.”

Emotionally we are wedded to our country, and Angel maintains it’s okay to be negative because the more you hate the more you care. And it’s the passion that drives us. “Trust your passion,” says Angel, “and then think how can we make it better.”

Which makes her job all the more important, to tell the stories of the good and the bad. And from where I am sitting, for every bad-news story there are ten good ones.

Like Mapungubwe National Park in the far

north, a hotbed of intrigue and controversy since it was proclaimed in the 1920s. But locals are passionate about the area and, notwithstanding setbacks and losing the battle against a coal-mining giant, a new community spirit has taken root and the shared vision of creating a transfrontier reserve with Botswana and Zimbabwe is finally becoming a reality (*Place of Jackals and the Wisdom Stone* page 38).

So let’s tell the great success stories like that of the little Swaziland weaving business. Started by farmer’s wife Jenny Thorne to help 30 Swazi women generate their own income, Gone Rural today provides an income to 740 rural women and supplies more than 1 000 shops in 32 countries, including London’s upmarket Selfridges and The Conran Shop (*Song of the Weavers* page 98).



Let’s fête the talented South Africans, like conservationist and wildlife photographer Peter Chadwick, who uses the power of his award-winning photos to bring about change, not only in our country but for the good of the planet (*Bird’s-eyeView* page 76). And petite Chantel Dartnall, two-time winner of the prestigious Chef of the Year competition, who could work at the best restaurants in the world but chooses to stay home in the bushveld of Gauteng’s Crocodile River Valley, where she finds inspiration for her fantastic botanical cuisine (*Art on a Plate* page 108).

Even our recent Grammy award-winner, flautist Wouter Kellerman, who travels the world playing his New Age music, comes home whenever he can to spend inspiring family holidays on the Garden Route (*Parting Shot* page 128).

And for some real melt-in-your-mouth inspiration, a bit of feelgood of the finest kind, the more than 40 artisanal chocolatiers in the country will be ensuring oodles of happiness for all of us come Easter time (*Welcome to the Chocolate Factory* page 102).

Let’s celebrate the good stories.

Nita

Nita Hazell
Editor

COUNTRY LIFE

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DISTRIBUTION RNA

12 Nobel Street, Industria 2093 P O Box 101, Maraisburg 1700

011 248 3500, fax 011 474 3583, email rna@RNAD.co.za

Printed by CTP Printers, Boompies Street, Parow East,

Cape Town. Published by the proprietors, Caxton Magazines,

Reg. No: 68/1258/06 368 Jan Smuts Avenue, Craighall, Box 1610, Parklands

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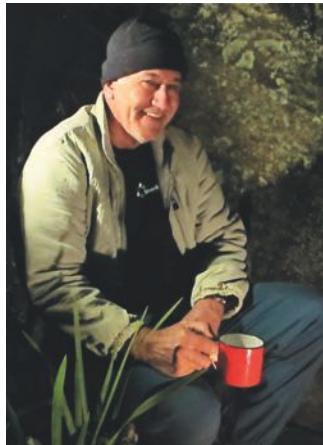
Not for Sale to Persons Under the Age of 18.

Contributors

Peter Brigg

At the End of the Road

page 90



Peter Brigg has always loved nature and outdoor adventures, hiking and camping in mountain wilderness areas in particular. Centred around this is pursuing his passions for flyfishing and wild trout in high-altitude streams throughout South Africa and abroad. His other loves are photography, and art, specialising in birds using the medium of pastels. Peter is a regular contributor to COUNTRY LIFE and has also published a book *Call of the Stream* and written numerous features for local and international flyfishing magazines. Read about his hunt for brown trout in the Berg's Lotheni River, in **At the End of the Road** on page 90.

Myrna Robins

Is it Elgin or Eden?

page 64



Myrna Robins exchanged the quiet of an academic library for food and feature writing and restaurant reviewing. A decade later she added travel and wine, and then reviewing non-fiction to her portfolio, and is also an author. Exploring history – Cape history in particular – is an ongoing pleasure that, when coupled with food and wine, she finds irresistible. Her research into the first fruit farms in Elgin uncovered dogged detective work, and coincided with a project to find and reintroduce heirloom apple varieties, both of which resulted in her feature **Is it Elgin or Eden?** on page 64. It's a story both delicious and rewarding.

Andrea Abbott

A Herd Act to Follow

page 46



When **Andrea Abbott** learnt that the Wildlands Conservation Trust had introduced Nguni cattle to Dartmoor, she was madly impressed that this organisation based in KwaZulu-Natal should have such a far reach. "I was also momentarily puzzled. African cattle on icy Dartmoor? I'd only just been to that famous national park in England and couldn't picture Ngunis at home there." It turned out that the Dartmoor in question was a farm in Karkloof in the KZN Midlands, where Ngunis are part of a project to restore environmental integrity to a critically endangered grassland biome. Read about it in **A Herd Act to Follow** on page 46.

Anita de Villiers

Blade Runners

page 26



For photojournalist **Anita de Villiers**, to travel is to discover places and people with an authentic soul. Places like a working farm in the Sandveld called Kersefontein, where the people and the seasons hold the 245-year-old history of the Melck family close to its heart. On the farm, the cream on the milk would make even Tim Noakes jealous. And you have to watch your back and your step when walking around the farmyard – a testosterone-crazy cock is on the loose, along with a number of pigs, cows and sheep. Read Anita's story **Blade Runners** (page 26) about the traditional sheep shearing on the farm.



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Gnarly
waves dude!

SHARK! No IT WAS...



Conquer the sandcastle

SHARK! No IT WAS A SEAL...

sprite sprint

sprite swing

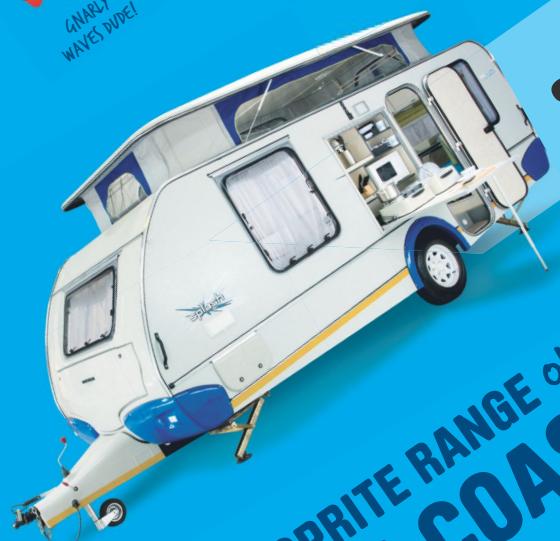


Conquer the sandcastle

SHARK! No IT WAS A SEAL...



sprite splash



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Conquer the sandcastle

SHARK! No IT WAS A SEAL...

WINNING LETTER

LIKE A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES

Reading the November 2014 article *The Great Karoo Pub Crawl*, I drew up a mental list of 'must visit' Karoo pubs and the Tankwa Padstal was very high on that list. Subsequently, while on our December road trip we were saddened to read on the COUNTRY LIFE website that the padstal and pub had been torched. We were, however, heartened to also read that the padstal would be back on its feet when we planned to be in the area, after operating from a marquee for a while. You can't keep Karoo folk like Hein (pictured below) and Wally Lange down for long.

We finally visited it while en route between Cape Town and the Tankwa Karoo National Park. Being first-timers we had no frame of reference to compare the pre- and post-fire padstal, but we loved it! In the new pub and from his place behind the bar, Wally told us that the pub was previously part of the padstal building but, after the fire, they built a new pub adjoining the padstal. It was erected in a month and decorated in a week. Many of the decorations were donated by loyal patrons who wanted to be part of the restoration and leave a part of themselves in the pub.

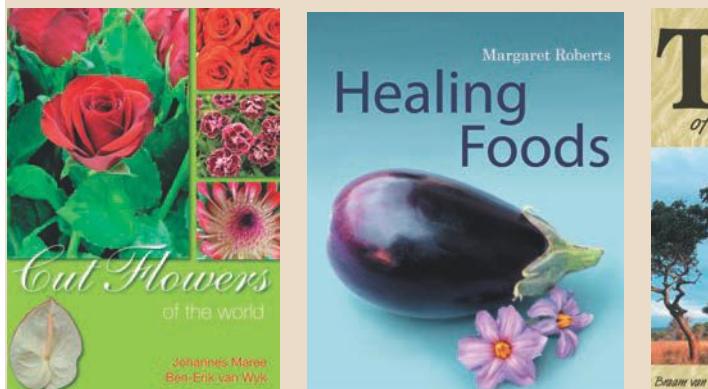
Wally is at one with the Karoo. With a twinkle in his eye, he shared lively anecdotes and interesting facts about his piece of Karoo paradise. Our children were fascinated when he pulled out a long cobra skin to show them. This too was a gift from a friend of the padstal. I'm certain that this will not be our last visit.

Ursula van Lelyveld, via email



CONGRATS TO URSLA VAN LELYVELD

Your letter has won you a book hamper to the value of R920 from Briza. *Cut Flowers of the World* is a full-colour photographic guide describing and illustrating more than 330 different species of commercially important flowers, foliages and potted flowers. The second book is *Healing Foods*, essential reading for those of us seeking health and energy in our increasingly stressful lives. Finally, *Photo Guide to Trees of Southern Africa* is an identification and reference guide to 300 of the more common tree species in the region both native and naturalised. www.briza.co.za



McGREGOR MAGIC

I write as a resident of McGregor, a village that relies on tourism for its livelihood, with regard to the article *The Village That Just Feels Right* (February 2015). I fear visitors will now perceive there to be only two restaurants, neither child friendly and one of which (Karoux) opens in the evenings only, apart from Sunday.

No mention is made of the McGregor or Lord's wineries, and the other restaurants of Frangipani, DeliGirls, The Overdraught pub and Old Post Office pub. Nor does the article make clear that there are in fact a huge number of places to stay in the village (over 200 beds) apart from Temenos and Rhebokskraal which it mentions.

The article refers to the Saturday market but, apart from the usual Supermarket, the village has an international deli open seven days a week that sells a huge variety of meat, fish, cheese, fresh bread etc. (some describe it as a mini Thrupps). McGregor is also a staging post for the Cape Epic and Ride2Nowhere cycle races and the annual Food and Wine Festival. (edited)

Paul Trim, via email

MORE McGREGOR

We were surprised when we read the interesting article, *The Village That Just Feels Right*, that there was no mention of Green Gables. McGregor is certainly a beautiful place, we have visited it at least three times from Knysna and Green Gables has been our reason for returning. The breakfasts and dinners are superb and the decor charming. We have met so many interesting people in the cosy



IMAGE CLUB LIONESSES

pub, mostly international guests who also love returning to enjoy the hospitality of the Meyer family. The guest house was originally known as The Old Mill and is about 150 years old. (edited)

Mike Pellett, via email

As you can well imagine it's virtually impossible for our contributors to cover everything in a special town like McGregor in a single feature. All we can do is pique the readers' interest and encourage them to explore the destination for themselves. And there will certainly be other opportunities in future issues to return to McGregor. We're sympathetic to the establishments not included in features like these, and our Classifieds advertising team goes to great lengths to contact the tourism centre and business community of the towns to offer them the opportunity to advertise alongside the feature and share in the exposure. Thanks to readers like you, we hear about the ones that got away. – Ed

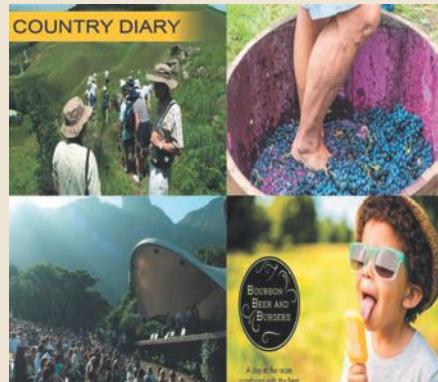
VISITOR OWLS

I want to share this photo of the amazing owls that visited our garden at the beginning of the year and stayed the whole day. The male was sitting not far away on our neighbour's wall checking on the mother and baby. Considering that we live close to town and not in the countryside, this was a real New Year's gift for me and my family. It was also a reminder of how important it is to protect the fauna and flora in South Africa. I'm 100 per cent Italian and also proudly South African by marriage, and I hope this country can learn from the mistakes made by the rest of the world.

Cristina Raubenheimer, Somerset-West



DO IT ALL WITH OUR DIGITAL DIARY



Digital Diary

There's usually more happening in the countryside than we think. In fact, the trick often is keeping track of shows, markets, festivals, concerts and all the other fun to be had under the South African sun. But we can help. Visit our online diary (find the link on our homepage: www.countrylife.co.za) for a wide selection of upcoming events, plus contact details and information on how to book. We'll see you there.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR JANUARY 2015 WINNERS



MONICA PASCHEK from

Johannesburg has won seven nights for six guests at the Three Cities Greenway Woods Resort at White River (above) worth R15 000



ELIZE SEYFFERT from Vanderbijlpark

has won five nights for six guests at the Three Cities Alpine Heath Resort in the Northern Drakensberg (above) valued at R13 500

April Diary

3-11

Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstefees Oudtshoorn

It's that time of year when the Klein Karoo pumps with music, theatre, great food, the best Afrikaans and contemporary South African music, and plenty of gees. There are also numerous arts exhibitions and food and craft markets. This year Marius Weyers will be on stage in *Die Seemeeu*, Margit Meyer-Rödenbeck (pictured) takes the lead in *Lieve Heksie Flower Power*, and there's an exhibition by legendary photographer Peter Magubane. But that's just a taste of the fabulous, packed programme.

044 203 8600, info@kknk.co.za; www.kknk.co.za, 3-11 April



Easter celebrations and festivals are here, the perfect chance for you to leave the city behind and get out there. Breathe in deep, lap up the hospitality, and kick up your heels in the countryside



3-5

Sedgefield Slow Festival Garden Route

Celebrate wholesome goodness, the outdoors and great food on the Garden Route, where there is plenty of entertainment and sports challenges for everyone, as well as markets with delectable foods, the best coffee, an array of organic products, arts and crafts. There is also an Art in the Park exhibition and a dog show.

072 949 3002, info@slowfestival.co.za

www.slowfestival.co.za

3-5 April



4

National Alpaca Day

This event is coordinated by the South African Alpaca Breeders Society to generate awareness of the alpaca in South Africa. All participating alpaca farms in the country are open to the public, where you can feed the alpacas, learn about them and their amazing fleece and buy handmade home-grown South African alpaca products.

Find a farm near you at www.alpacasociety.co.za, 4 April



4

Wakkerstroom Easter Country Fair Mpumalanga

It's getting quite a reputation as one of the ideal getaways, is this hamlet, and now's the chance to pay a visit when the Easter fair has plenty of local craft, produce and good fun on offer.

078 416 3712, 082 371 8250

4 April

Irene Easter Market Centurion

It's a real family affair at the renowned Irene market, this one specially laid on to celebrate Easter. From 09h00-16h00 next to the Smuts Museum, enjoy more than 250 arts and crafts stalls plus great food and live music, while the kids get stuck in to plenty of entertainment just for them.

012 667 1659, irenemkt@mweb.co.za

www.irenemarket.co.za, 4 April

Email the details of your event, with a photograph, to diary@caxton.co.za



2-12

Stars of Sandstone Steam Heritage Festival **Eastern Free State**

The spectacular Sandstone Estates near Ficksburg, with its world-renowned 26km narrow-gauge railway plus its airstrip, is the setting for this annual celebration of all the steam-driven vehicles and machines that have been restored to pristine condition by Wilfred Mole and his team. There are all kinds of transport on show, from vintage aeroplanes, military vehicles, trek oxen, old tractors and steam lorries to traction engines, locomotives, and old buses and cars. Old tractors and other agricultural relics in mint condition are also on display, plus there's a special Armour Parade and various other military activities.

051 933 2235, 076 024 6188, lclarke@sandstone.co.za, www.sandstone-estates.co.za, 2-12 April



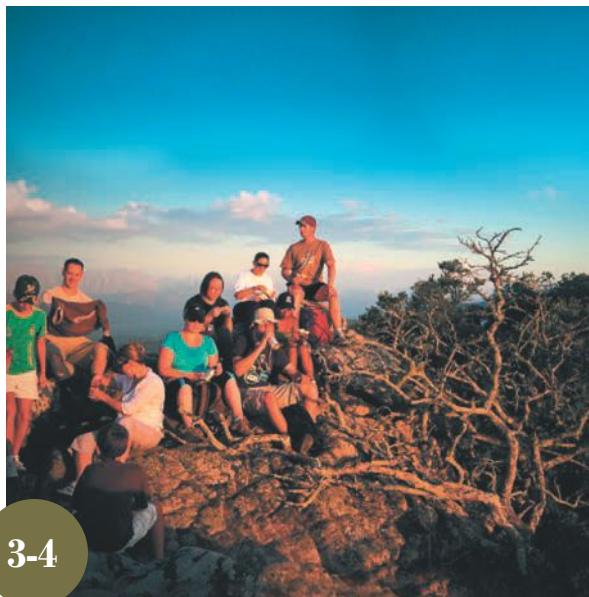
3-6

Easter at Durbanville Hills Wines **Cape Winelands**

Cape Winelands

Enjoy live music, glorious views, wine tastings, breakfast, lunch or cheese and charcuterie platters at this wine estate. For the kids there are Easter egg hunts in the vineyards, face-painting and a jumping castle.

021 558 1300, sibrown@durbanvillehills.co.za, durbanvillehills.co.za, 3-6 April



3-4

Easter Full-moon Hikes **Stellenbosch**

Watch the sunset from Klapmutskop, with stunning views of the Winelands and Table Mountain in the distance. Enjoy your picnic and see the full moon rise over the Hottentots Holland Mountains. Bring warm clothing and a torch.

021 884 4752, info@dirtopia.co.za, www.dirtopia.co.za, 3-4 April



2-6

Splashy Fen Music Festival **KwaZulu-Natal**

South Africa's longest-running music festival attracts fans every year to a farm near Underberg in the Southern Drakensberg for a long weekend of live music. There are food and drink outlets, a vibrant craft market, a trail run plus an all-new comedy line-up.

031 563 0824, www.splashyfen.co.za, 2-6 April

April Diary



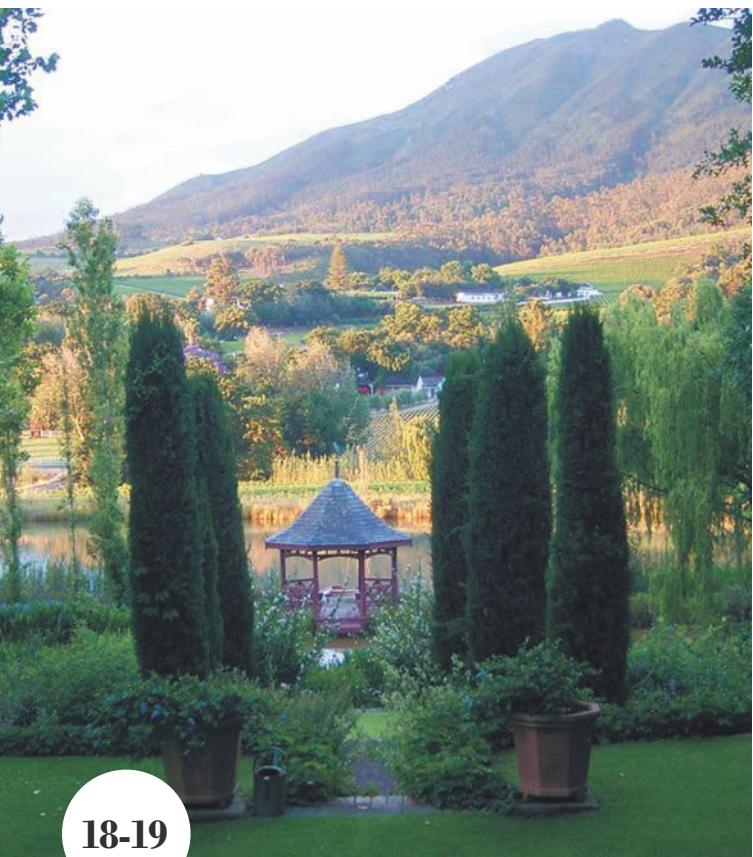
1-26

The Industrial Karoo – Fear & Loss **Pretoria**

A collection of artworks curated by Katie Barnard du Toit is showing at the South Gallery of the Pretoria Art Museum. The exhibition presents more than 80 artists who probe themes of conflict, capitalism and environmental destruction in the Karoo.

012 344 1807, www.tshwane.gov.za/pretoria-art-museum

1-26 April



18-19

Klein Optenhorst Open Garden **Wellington**

Klein Optenhorst shows off its autumn colours, with borders of many unusual plants that thrive in the Western Cape heat, among them more than 70 salvia species, a magnet for birds and insects. The nursery specialises in salvias but is also stocked with many other rare and unusual plants. There is also an exhibition of Carolyn Metcalfe's paintings and ceramics.

021 864 1210, jenny.ferreira01@gmail.com, 18-19 April



1-8

Gateway to Antarctica **Cape Town**

An exhibition of 11 paintings of historic Antarctic ships by world-renowned artist, Peter Bilas have been restored and are on show at Iziko Maritime Centre, V&A Waterfront, prior to being transferred to the SA Agulhas II.

021 405 2880, www.iziko.org.za/museums/maritime-centre, 1-8 April

18-19

Baardskeerdersbos Art Route **Overberg**

The artists of this quirky hamlet once again open their homes to art lovers for a weekend of solo shows, country hospitality and some much-needed stoep sitting.

082 651 7414, 18-19 April





25-27

SA Cheese Festival Stellenbosch

The widest variety of cheese is on offer at Sandringham farm, plus exciting new products, and live entertainment. As usual the top names in food will be giving talks, workshops and demos. New this year is the Maze, with Nataniël, Giggling Gourmet Jenny Morris, wine expert Bernard Gutman, whisky guru Marsh Middleton and coffee fundi David Donde guiding visitors along a gourmet maze of cheese, steak, whisky and wine, coffee and more.

**021 975 4440, cheese@agriexpo.co.za
www.cheesefestival.co.za, 25-27 April**

Email the details of your event, with a photograph, to diary@caxton.co.za



18

Biltong & Pinotage Festival Stellenbosch

A fabulous celebration of two South African taste icons – biltong and red Pinotage. Alongside a wide range of these products is a gourmet barbecue section – to add some spice to your life at this inaugural festival at L' Avenir wine estate. There are also rosés, bubbles, blends, a white Pinotage, and entertainment for the kids while you enjoy live music under the trees. For the serious wine lover there are Pinotage master classes by winemaker Dirk Coetze.

www.plankton.mobi, www.joubertandmonty.co.za, 18 April

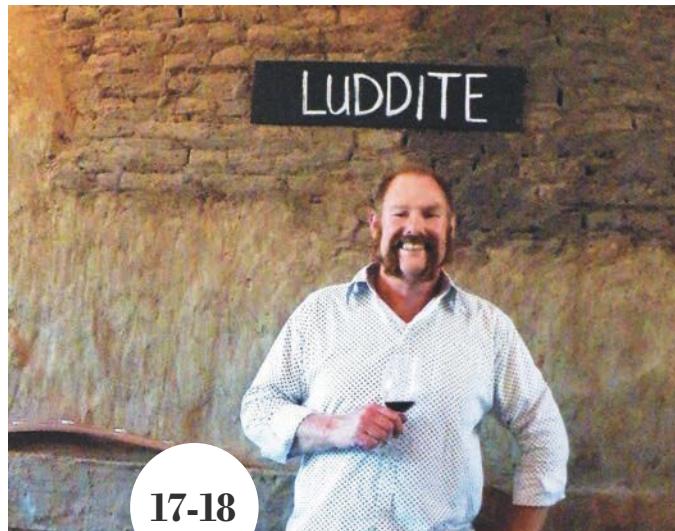


24-27

Decorex Cape Town

The Cape Town stage of the country's leading decor and design expo, themed 'Home of Great Ideas', takes place at the International Convention Centre. Find the latest in everything from fabrics, furnishings and accessories to kitchens, bathrooms, technology and home DIY.

**011 549 8300, decorexsa@ThebeReed.co.za
www.decorex.co.za
24-27 April**



17-18

Bot River Barrels & Beards Overberg

Delight in a weekend filled with bold wines, raging beards, genuine hospitality and a fabulous feast when the wine community of Bot River in the Overberg celebrates their harvest. The Bot River Auction Reserve 2013 wine is also being launched, and perhaps the most fun is the special function when wine growers finally 'harvest' the beards they've been cultivating alongside their wine for all these months.

082 852 6547, nicolene@botriverwines.co.za, 17-18 April



011

April Diary



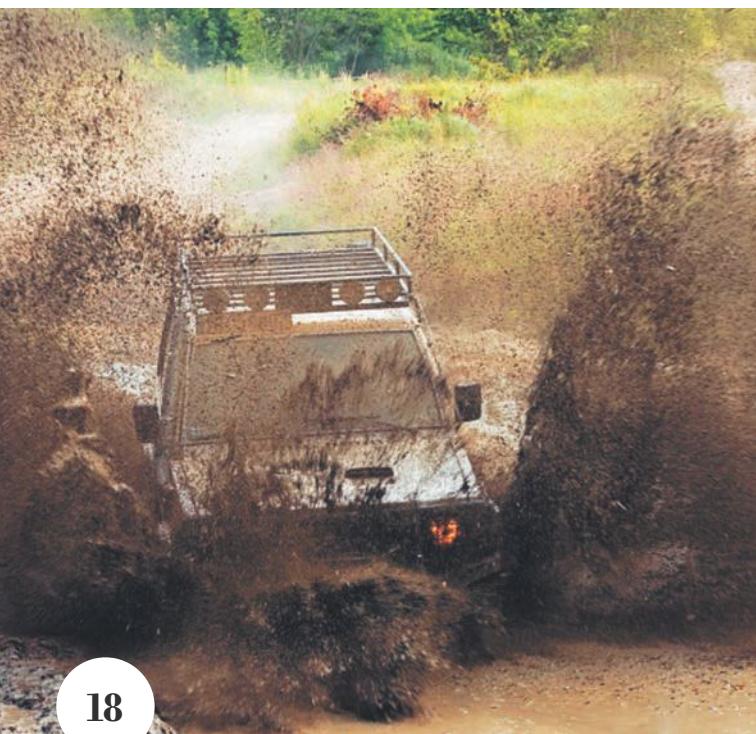
18

Franschhoek Wedding Showcase

Cape Winelands

Everything you need to plan your big day is on show at Le Franschhoek Hotel & Spa, in this romantic picturesque village.

021 876 2861, office@franschhoek.org.za
www.franschhoek.org.za, 18 April



18

Weekend Warrior North West Province

Moegatle between Brits and Thabazimbi is the place for 4x4 enthusiasts to be, where they can give their all when tackling the exciting Terror Trail.

www.theweekendwarrior.co.za 18 April



Walks at Melville Koppies Nature Reserve

Johannesburg

Enjoy guided walks and walks with your dog in this pocket of nature at its best, right in the middle of the Big City.

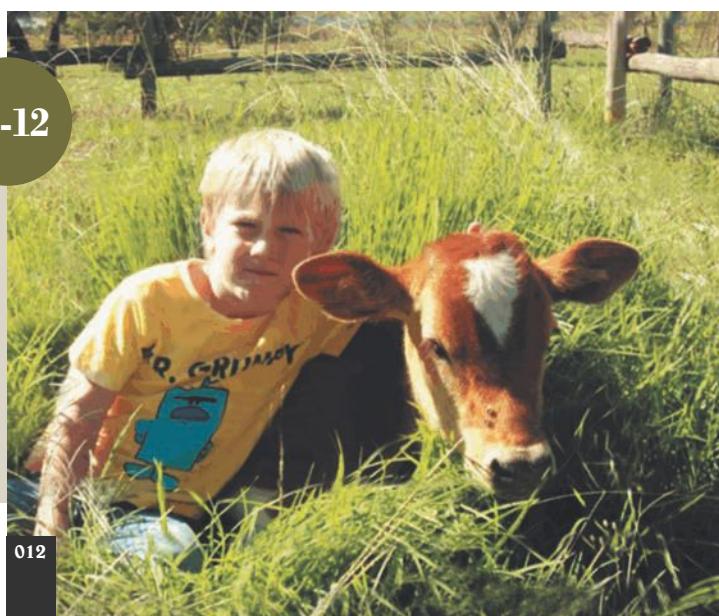
011 482 4797, www.mk.org.za 4, 5, 12, 19, 26 April

11-12

Walkerville Agricultural Show Gauteng

After a hiatus of 13 years, this annual show is heading for a revival at the Walkerville Show Grounds. This year there will also be stalls and activities that represent smallholder, farming, business and community interests. In the arena there'll be stock parades, equestrian events such as show jumping and dressage, and dog shows. Stalls and exhibits range from agricultural and home-industry products and machinery to arts and crafts.

011 949 4267, show@walkervillesa.co.za, 11-12 April



012

We've been creating
your family memories
for 30 years



as only the countryside can

Image Club

The countryside through our readers' eyes and lenses. Here are this month's four winning entries in our photographic competition



First Prize

A R1 000 cash prize

A great, moody atmosphere created by clouds and mist which, with the muted colours, off-centre mountain peak and the framing and quality of the container ship, make this photograph an all-round winner. It's so simple, with lots of space, and the rule of thirds has been adhered to. Well done, Stu, for making an attractive photograph out of what is, let's face it here, an unattractive subject. An example of seizing the moment. Lion's Head appeared through the cloud for just a second and the photographer, on Bloubergstrand, pressed the shutter.

PHOTOGRAPHER Stu Bowie

CAMERA Canon 1D Mark IV, Canon 300mm lens

SETTINGS f6.3 at 1/3200sec, ISO 500

Our judge this month is **Dale Morris**, a regular contributor to COUNTRY LIFE. Born in the United Kingdom, Dale purchased a one-way ticket at the age of 18, and thus became an exceptionally well-travelled refugee. He finally put down roots but that hasn't ended his regular photographic adventures into Southern Africa and beyond. Dale's award-winning writing and wildlife and travel photography have been published worldwide. See his images on www.geckoeye.com



Second Prize

A R750 cash prize

Okay, we have seen the photo subject of an oryx against the dunes of Namibia a thousand times before, but it's always captivating if taken correctly (which Elmar most certainly has done, in this image taken in Sossusvlei). The layered ruby tones of the desert provide an abstract canvas on which the oryx gives context. Its placement in the bottom left third of the image brings the whole photograph together. It's a landscape shot and a wildlife shot, and a very nice shot to boot.

PHOTOGRAPHER Elmar Venter

CAMERA Canon EOS, Canon 7D 70-200 lens at 105mm

SETTINGS f11, 1/800sec, ISO 500

Image Club



Third Prize

A R500 cash prize

The photographer was at Mabula Game Lodge in the Limpopo bushveld, taking some low-angle shots at sunset, when this Natal Spurfowl strolled into his viewfinder. Other than the distracting, blurry grass stalks obscuring part of the bird's chest, what a lovely and unusual shot he created. The golden colours make it instantly eye-catching, as does the 'halo' around the bird's head. The low angle and shallow depth of field bring your eye squarely onto the bird, whose cocked head is so quirky and cute, and makes him quite the comedic character.

PHOTOGRAPHER Wayne Marks

CAMERA Canon 10D, Sigma 70-200mm lens at 200mm

SETTINGS f2.8 at 1/500 sec, ISO 200



Fourth Prize

A R250 cash prize

What can I say? It's a cute picture of a lion cub – taken at Kwang Waterhole in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park – and we all love cute pictures of lion cubs. The aspects that help this photo stand out somewhat from the millions of other photos of cute lion cubs that I have seen so far this year is the eye contact, the nice low angle (which makes that eye contact somehow personal) and the interesting use of a square crop. It would have been even nicer if the second cub wasn't in the frame, but he was, and wildlife photographers have to work with what nature gives them.

PHOTOGRAPHER Jacobus de Wet

CAMERA Nikon D810, Nikon 300mm lens with 1.4x converter (420mm)

SETTINGS f5.6 at 1/1600, ISO 600

ENTER OUR IMAGE CLUB COMPETITION Email your entry to imageclub@caxton.co.za or enter online at www.countrylife.co.za.

Read the competition rules online or phone Carolyn on 011 889 0726 for an email copy. See this month's entries on our Facebook page.

OUT & ABOUT in Hoedspruit



DOWN IN THE HOED

The story goes that after a long hot day in the saddle trekking over the mountains, one of the pioneers arrived in the Lowveld and threw his hat (*hoed* in Afrikaans) into the cool waters of the Sandspruit River (now mostly dry) and decided to stay. Hence the name Hoedspruit (Hat Creek). To commemorate this event there is now a large hat statue outside the railway station.

The town remained small until tourism took off but recently it's become the centre of eco-tourism in the Limpopo. Because it's the centre of supplies for all the luxury lodges in the surrounding bushveld, you'll find that this is not one-horse-town shopping. Put your hat on, head into the bushveld heat and go shopping.

Hoedspruit Tourism 083 299 3388

Hoedspruit Info 015 306 0244



WATERING HOLE

Watering holes in the bush can be a little dangerous for four-legged creatures when trying to get a drink, but for a thirsty human Sleepers Restaurant and Pub is the place to go. Set in the original railway station, the old ticket counter serves as the pub. Co-owner Maja Prinsloo says this is where all the locals come. Apparently the Blue Train still passes through occasionally and the passengers stop off for a drink. Good food and a great atmosphere make this watering hole a must if you are passing through the 'Hoed'.

Sleepers 015 793 1014



ABOVE: Sleepers is a family affair where everyone is welcome. LEFT: The Hat and Creek Restaurant is another popular drinking hole in Hoedspruit.



KITTING UP

Anyone who has fallen in love with a rugged ranger will know that it's called 'khaki fever'. There is a new kind of Khaki Fever in Hoedspruit in the form of a wonderful range of specially designed bush clothes. Sharon Haussmann, who owns the shop, says it's all made of cool cotton in bush colours that takes this clothing to a new level of chic. These are clothes designed by people who live in the bush and know what's important. And there are clothes for all ages. If you feel the need to look good while gazing at an elephant, stop off at Khaki Fever. You can also find all those useful little gadgets that you always forget to pack, like torches and penknives.

Khaki Fever 015 001 7079



Sturdy boots are essential for bush walking.

You might think Hoedspruit is a one-horse town but it's become the centre of the bushveld buzz and has some well-kept secrets

WORDS AND PICTURES SUE ADAMS



EATING OUT

The journey to the bushveld can be long and tiring so a little sustenance is always welcome. Piri Piri Café has a tiny little sushi bar that has become renowned in the bushveld for the best sushi – some say even better than anywhere near the sea. Harryson Mongemoratho, the sushi chef, trained in Gauteng, has a big smile and an even bigger sushi knife that he wields with great effect to produce works of art that beg to be eaten. Next door, Piri Piri Portuguese Café serves really good piri piri chicken and a range of other dishes, with ‘to die for’ chocolate brownies for dessert. Safari Grill and Sports Bar has cool mist sprayers for hot days, tasty snack baskets and excellent Eisbein.

Sushi Bar & Piri Piri Portuguese Café 015 001 7087

Safari Grill and Sports Bar 082 789 2608



STOCKING UP

If you want nasturtium leaves for your salad or the freshest baby vegetables for your roast or fine herbs for a sage pasta, La Bamba is the place to shop. Owned by Frankie dos Santos and his family, who have been in the food business forever, La Bamba caters for the luxury lodge market and has to ensure that everything is of the highest quality. Next door is Bosveld Slaghuis (butchery) with an incredible array of biltong including chicken chilli bites (an essential on any bush visit), as well as South African delights such as ‘vlermuisies’. And next door to that is a bottle store, Tonsanby, that will put any such Big City stores to shame, and allow you to drink the best French bubbles with your biltong.

La Bamba

015 793 2634

Bosveld Butchery

015 793 2134

Tonsanby Liquor Store

015 793 2240

The array of biltong at Bosveld Slagters is boggling.



GIFTS GALLORE

The name may not make a whole lot of sense but Mad Cows is the perfect place to buy a memento of a trip to the bush, or a gift for the people you’re about to visit. Bianca Black specialises in searching for unusual pieces from across Africa so that any gift you buy will not be a run-of-the-mill curio. I particularly love the walking sticks in bright colours and the gourd lights. In the same little Rock Fig Lifestyle Centre is Details of Africa, where artist Warren Cary’s delicate bush art is printed on clothing. A silk scarf or piece of jewellery will add some colour to your bush outfit.

Mad Cow 0795030151

Details of Africa 082 564 6617 or 079 503 0151



Warren Cary’s art translates beautifully onto clothing.

The French Collection

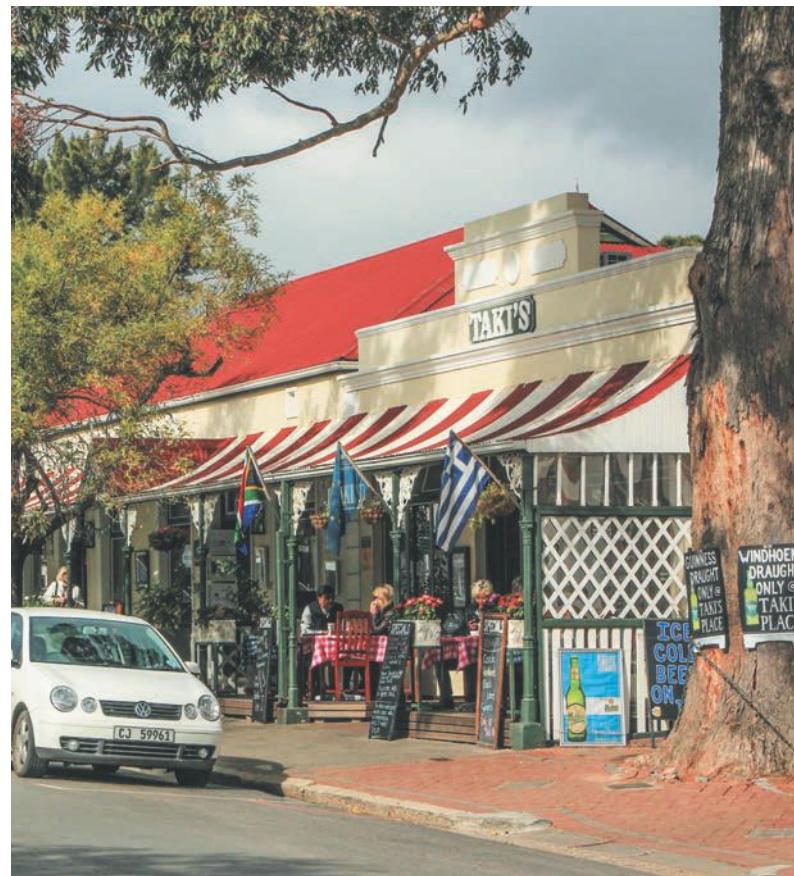
With its music and its wine and, best of all, its books,
Franschhoek in autumn is the place to be

WORDS AND PICTURES CHRIS MARAIS AND JULIENNE DU TOIT WWW.KAROOSPACE.CO.ZA



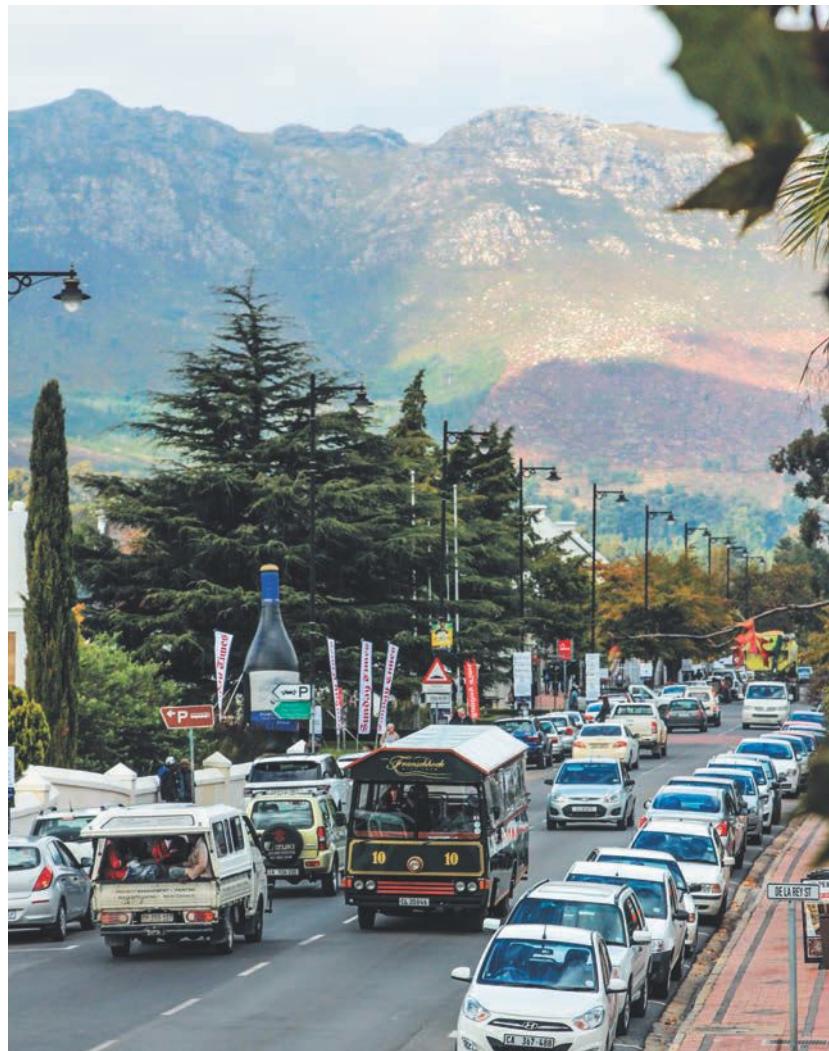


OPPOSITE: The Franschhoek Huguenot Monument is highly symbolic. The female figure clasps a Bible in her right hand, and a broken chain in her left hand, indicating freedom of religious belief. A fleur-de-lis on her dress indicates nobility of character. She is shown shrugging off the cloak of oppression and stands above the Earth, spiritually free. ABOVE: Country lanes and vineyards create the charming backdrop to Franschhoek. BELOW LEFT: The Literary Festival is well organised and signposted. BELOW RIGHT: Franschhoek's Huguenot Street calls you to settle at a pavement table and order a bottle of wine.





ABOVE: The dogs of La Bourgogne Farm. They love guests. BELOW: Part of the main homestead at La Bourgogne. RIGHT: The Wine Tram traverses Franschhoek's astoundingly good wine estates.



Our wild Huguenot souls afloat with grape expectations and the prospect of a bakkie-load of book sales, my partner Julianne du Toit and I crested the lip of the Franschhoek Pass and gazed upon the lush valley that stretched before us. The Groot Drakenstein range stood proud and jagged. Its peaks kept the company of clouds and stood with their heads high above the valley of patchwork wine estates, the village and the exclusive lifestyle settlements.

The great Karoo poet and rural magistrate, William Charles Scully, once made this rather tart observation: 'The wilderness has ever been the rich storehouse of spiritual things. Man gains corporeal, moral and intellectual power in the arid waste, and loses them in the land of corn and wine'.

These are words that Jules and I can heartily endorse. We live in the 'arid waste' of the Karoo Heartland, although after the recent rains it looks more like the 'arid waste' of Ireland. And we work in the semi-desert,

gaining some measure of inspiration and strength from the orphan towns of inner South Africa – where the trains stopped running a long time ago.

Then, when we need to party, we climb into the old Isuzu and make our way down to the 'land of corn and wine' and partake of the grape and other fruits of the field under the watchful gaze of big mountains and occasionally disapproving Capetonians.

So, yeah, Franschhoek. And being Huguenot. Driving down the main road of this fine village, you curse the day you cut French classes. You re-experience that slight alienation of your first visit to Paris.

Remember when you walked into your first patisserie to buy a couple of baguettes? And you tried to say thank you in French and got the stone-eye from the cashier? You know that feeling, when you've entered a formal, very expensive restaurant in your baggies and thousand-miler sandals and suddenly can hear a pin drop?

Jules and I felt that, as we drove the dusty

bakkie down the main drag of Franschhoek. But it lasted no more than 30 seconds, and you know why? Because we're Huguenots, dammit. We belong here, probably more than most. You simply don't get more Huguenot than a Marais and a Du Toit.

So, armed with the innate confidence of 326 years of residence in this good land, we checked into La Bourgogne farm and found ourselves in the 'land of wine and olives'. We settled into a charming riverside cottage where, once the kitchen sink was unpacked, the wine, cheese and guitar emerged to the delight of the La Bourgogne Border collie, a feisty old dog called Joey. We set up the Wi-Fi, hauled in some logs for a cosy fire and made a comfortable bed on the stoep for Joey, using old blankets we always cart about on our travels.

But before I bore you to death with all our personal drivel, let's just focus on Franschhoek for a bit, shall we? We were here as participants in the 2014 Franschhoek Literary Festival (FLF), which, to our

collective mind, was a pretty big deal. Our passport photos were pasted up on the festival website in the Authors section, along with nearly 170 other writers and artists.

Antony Altbeker, Lauren Beukes, André P Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, Imraan Coovadia, Tim Couzens, Jenny Crwys-Williams, Dennis Davis, Finuala Dowling, Max du Preez, Mark Gevisser, Damon Galgut, Arthur Goldstuck, Adam Habib, John Hunt, Reg Lascaris, Tony Leon, Liz McGregor, Deon Meyer, Tim Noakes, Nick Norman, Mike Nicol, Yewande Omotoso, Desmond Tutu, Ivan Vladislavic, James Whyle and Zapiro. To name-drop a few.

We had a Karoo slideshow prepared, and were hoping to flog a few copies of our books *Karoo Keepsakes I* and *II*. The organisers had booked us into The Screening Room, a little theatre that is part of Le Quartier Français, a keystone establishment in Franschhoek. Within days of the programme announcement, our slideshow was booked out. They added another – that was taken up as well. The minute they advertised a third slideshow, the seats were taken. The Western Cape is full of Karoo fans.

FLF boss (and acclaimed author) Jenny Hobbs was organising her final festival. She'd run it brilliantly for many years, but had decided to spend

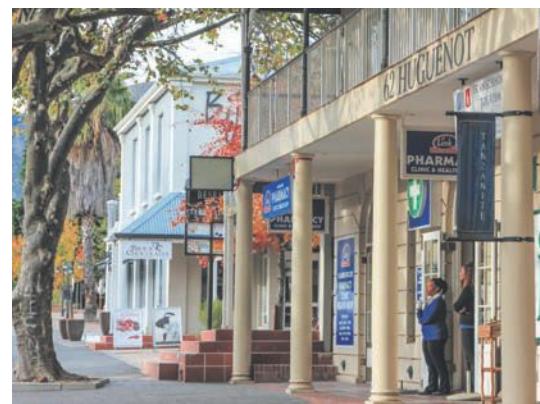
more time writing. Ann Donald, former owner of the famous bespoke Kalk Bay Books, was taking over. We found Jenny at The Green Room, a specially designated house where authors could gather, snack and prepare their talks.

Our first question was about the renaissance of Franschhoek. "It was kick-started by Susan Huxter and Le Quartier Français," she said. "Many people think Franschhoek is a place where rich people retire to and swan about in. It's actually a little village full of very hard-working people, and the Huxter/Friedman family is at the forefront. Apart from driving the hotel and restaurant, Susan was behind the

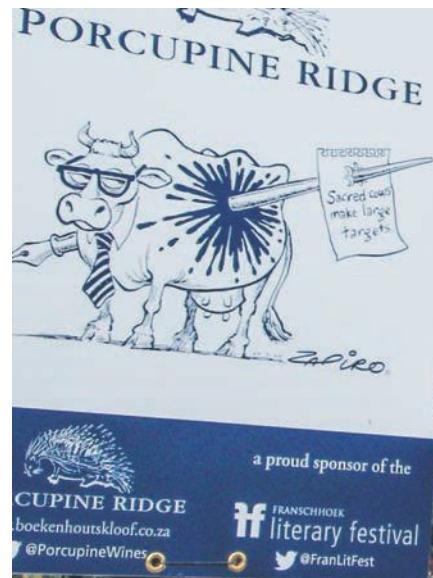
founding of Bridge House School, and this in turn has attracted younger families."

However, when we spoke to Susan Huxter a bit later, she was quick to deflect the founding glory of Franschhoek's latter-day Frenchness to other people like restaurateurs Michael Trull and Achim von Arnim. And then there's also Penny Gordon, my colleague from the treasured days of the *Rand Daily Mail* newspaper in Joburg. The Gordon family had been involved in Haute Cabrière, which became one of the world's top dining establishments.

Penny is still there at Hugenot Chocolates, working with her chocolatiers led by Denver Adonis and Danver Windvogel. We stood



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Former *Fair Lady* magazine editor and bookshop owner Ann Donald has taken over the running of the Franschhoek Literary Festival; The Franschhoek Tourism Information office is central and very efficient; Porcupine Ridge provided great wine and literary witticisms along Franschhoek's main road during the festival; The Franschhoek Town Hall is transformed into a vibey bookshop for the festival, complete with sofas and great coffee.





in awe inside their chocolate workshop, as Denver and his team were busy with the task of moulding little chocolate elephants and wrapping them in gold foil for the pillows of selected local guest houses and hotels. Others were creating wedding gifts of chocolate with edible images of the bride and groom.

Elephants? Turns out that before Franschhoek was Franschhoek, Franschhoek was Olifantshoek. Then we Huguenots moved in, hunted out the jumbo and renamed the place in honour of the home country.

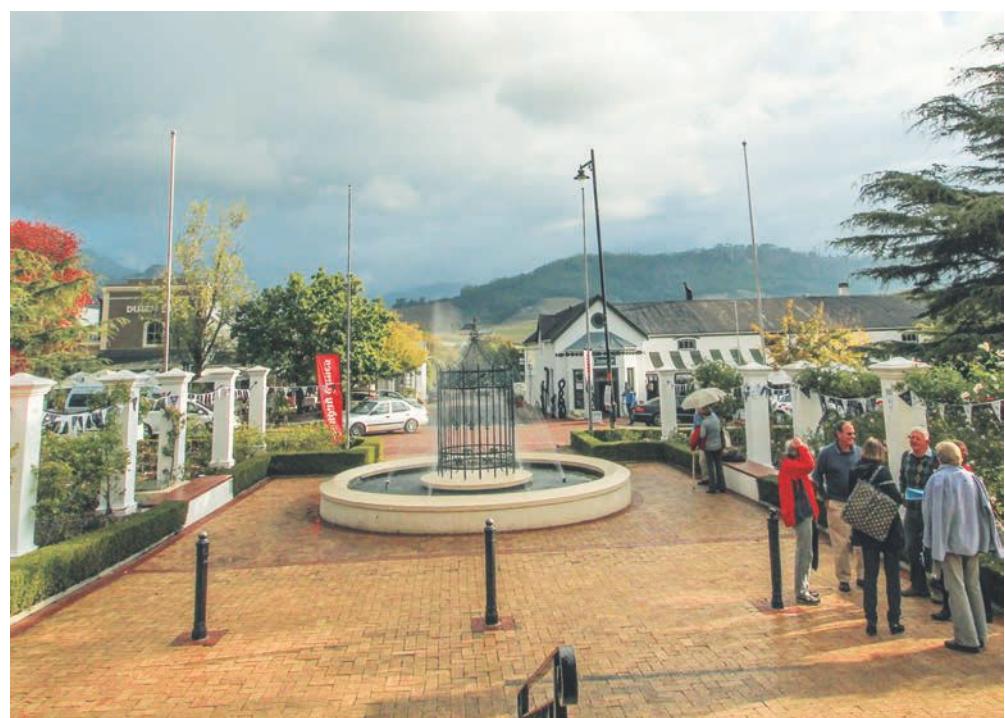
From one delicious evil to another, we strolled into The Bacon Pop-Up Bar between Le Quartier Français and The Screening Room. Truth be known, we were led here by our noses – as often happens when bacon is sizzling in the vicinity.

Here, one could have bacon in all its varied glory: bacon-heavy mac and cheese; cones of crispy bacon; bacon and cheese on sourdough; butternut soup laced with bacon; bacon butties, bacon brownies and the good old BLT sarmie. There was an image of the Dalai Lama on the wall, photo-bombed by a rasher of bacon. Marilyn Monroe. The Last Supper. The Royal Family. All baconised. We loved it to bacon bits.

And then we turned to the Franschhoek Literary Festival itself. The Town Hall had been transformed into a pop-up Exclusive Books, complete with droves of authors and lit-fans in their pre-winter fawns. Porcupine Ridge wine, made by Boekenhoutskloof, a really good local estate, is co-sponsor of the festival with the *Sunday Times*, and had



TOP: Author Jenny Hobbs, founder and director of the Franschhoek Literary Festival, has now retired to do more writing. ABOVE: Tourists alight from the Wine Tram. RIGHT: The town hall is transformed into Literary Festival Central. BELOW LEFT: On weekends, Franschhoek's streets are filled with interesting vehicles from across South Africa. BELOW RIGHT: The pretty main road of Franschhoek with towering peaks beyond.





LEFT: The Village Market is held beside the church in Franschhoek every Saturday, and is a feast for the senses. RIGHT: Part of the immaculately maintained Franschhoek Motor Museum at L'Ormarins wine estate. BELOW RIGHT: In 1688, the French Huguenots were settled in the Valley of the Elephants. Olifantshoek was later renamed Franschhoek, but elephant symbolism pops up all over the town.



posters with witty literary words up on every corner. Our shows went mostly well. We sold a few books, but we were in very rarefied atmosphere here, with some of the greatest authors in the country.

And just before we headed back to the wilderness for more inspiration, we had an encounter out at Ricketty Bridge wine estate with a large group of Chinese tourists

riding the Wine Tram. They'd been taking photographs of the sky, the grass, the texture of their ice creams and their toes. They were suitably delighted to have me photograph them. And I was, in turn, wonderfully surprised to have them photograph me.

That's what you do in Franschhoek, mate. You pass on the love... ■

Map reference F2 see inside back cover

Where to Play

- The **Franschhoek Literary Festival** 2015 runs from 15-17 May www.flf.co.za
- Franschhoek is one of the world's top destinations for interesting wines of French origin, so set aside plenty of time for **wine estate visits**. Many of these now have olive groves and offer olive oil tastings. You can also take a sparkling-wine route. Plot your visits to the vigneronns of Franschhoek at www.franschhoek.org.za
- The hop-on hop-off **Wine Tram** is a must and you avoid having to find a designated driver. There is lovely scenery en route, and it can be a day adventure, with long stops and picnics along the way. www.winetram.co.za
- Don't miss the **Huguenot Memorial Museum** complex and include time to admire the formal and rather lovely gardens. www.hugenoot.org.za
- If you love ceramics and creative people, slip off the main road to find **master potter David Walters** on Dirkie Uys Street. 021 876 4304 www.davidwalters.co.za
- **The Village Market** next to the church on Saturday mornings offers fabulous food and produce under shady trees. 021 876 2431.
- If you love vehicles, head straight to Dr Anton Rupert's staggering collection representing South African auto history, at the **Franschhoek Motor Museum** a short distance outside town on L'Ormarins wine estate. 021 874 9020, www.fmm.co.za
- Visit the historic **water mill and farm shop** at La Motte wine estate. 021 876 8000, www.la-motte.co.za

Where to Eat

- Franschhoek boasts scores of superb restaurants and eateries. These are but a few unmissables:
- South African chef Reuben Riffel comes from Franschhoek and his restaurant is justly famous. **Reuben's Restaurant, Bar & Deli** is a feature on the main road. 021 876 3772, www.reubens.co.za
 - Matthew Gordon helped establish Franschhoek as a foodie must-visit

at **Haute Cabrière**. He has trained dozens of new chefs and is now the chef-patron at the **French Connection** bistro. Don't miss his cooking. 021 876 4056, www.frenchconnection.co.za

- Margot Janse's cooking is also the stuff of legend. Head to **The Tasting Room** at Le Quartier Français to experience this, one of the most consistently excellent restaurants in South Africa. 021 876 2151, www.lequartier.co.za
- At **Ryan's Kitchen** you can enjoy modern South African cuisine (with a delicious twist) in a chef's-table setting, with an open kitchen. 021 876 4598, www.ryanskitchen.co.za
- The **Salmon Bar** is very popular. This is where you'll find great sushi, trout, salmon, and fresh and smoked terrines. 021 876 4591/2485
- At **Sacred Ground** they take the baking of the bread seriously, and you can tell by the delicious taste. Here you'll find artisan breads, cakes, sandwiches and an extensive deli with excellent charcuterie choices. 021 876 2759
- The wine estates around Franschhoek also have memorable places to eat. Some of the best include **Bread & Wine** at Môreson (021 876 4004, www.moreson.co.za), authentic **Fyndraai** at Solms-Delta (021 874 3937, www.solms-delta.co.za) and legendary **Babylonstoren** 021 863 3852, www.babylonstoren.com

Where to Stay

There is a bewildering variety of accommodation and consulting www.franschhoek.org.za is the best place to start.

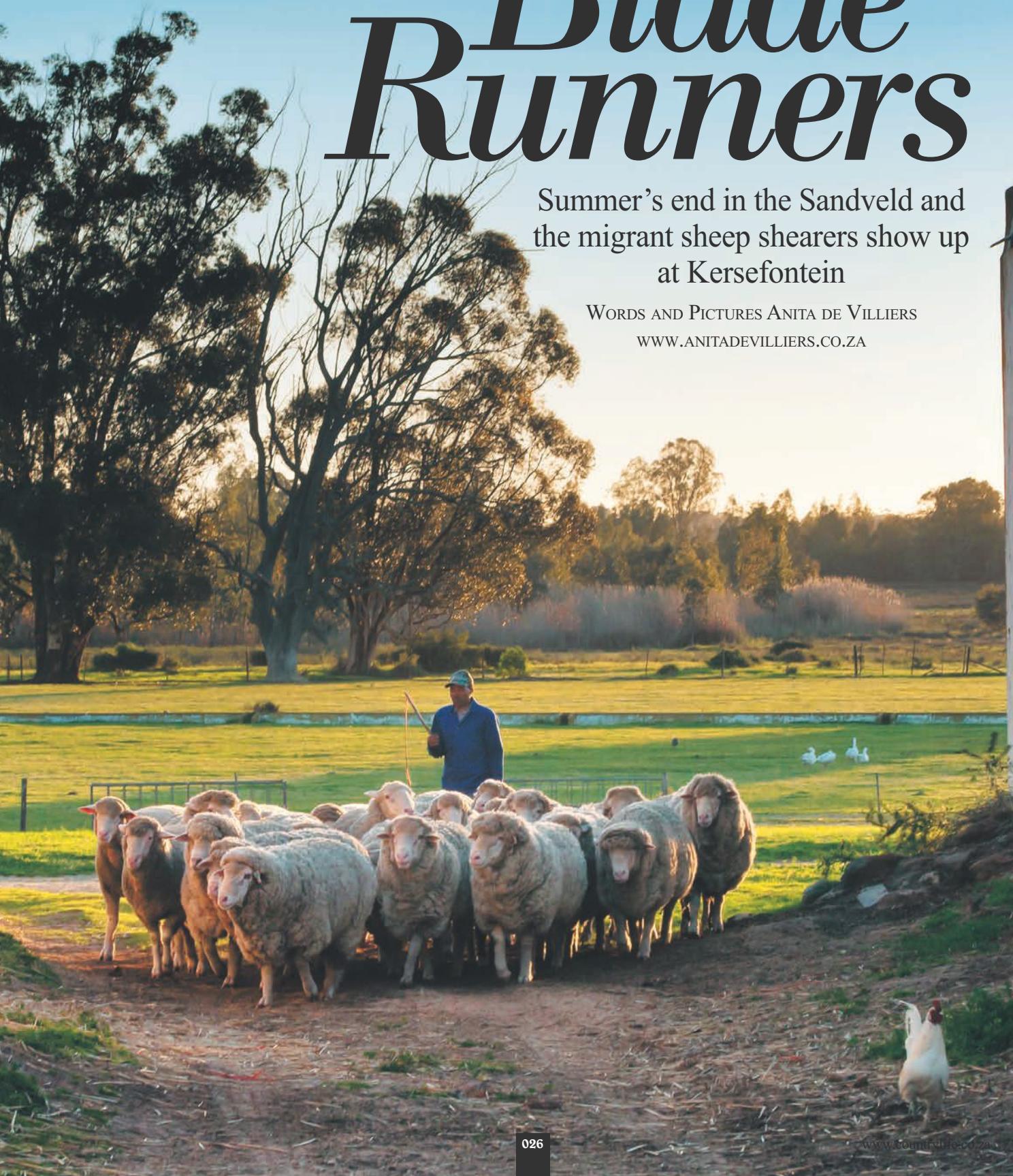
- You could also opt for a **Franschhoek Mystery Weekend**, a special accommodation deal offered several times a year. Everything is a surprise and you'll have no idea where you'll be staying (except that it's four or five star), what is planned for you and where you'll be eating, except that it's all good. For two people sharing, it includes two nights' luxury accommodation, a breakfast voucher, a dinner voucher, two surprise Franschhoek experiences, wine tastings, a shopping voucher, two tickets to The Screening Room, and a trip on the Wine Tram. 021 876 2861, www.franschhoek.org.za

Blade Runners

Summer's end in the Sandveld and
the migrant sheep shearers show up
at Kersefontein

WORDS AND PICTURES ANITA DE VILLIERS

WWW.ANITADEVILLIERS.CO.ZA





OPPOSITE: Late afternoon and time for the chickens to start roosting and the sheep to be herded into the kraal. ABOVE: The sandy soil of the Sandveld is a natural habitat for fynbos and reed-like restios, and the agriculture of the area consists mainly of wheat, cattle and sheep. BELOW: Owner of Kersefontein Julian Melck and friend Bianka Hartenstein enjoy a walk on the farm. The layout of the farmyard is similar to a village street flanked by the manor house, accommodation quarters for guests, sheds, stables, a chicken coop and an old slave bell. Expect to meet chickens, pigs and other farm animals in this mini village.



There is no more honest a job than shearing a sheep," are perceptive words from Julian Melck, owner of Kersefontein Guest Farm. In a world hurtling towards the future at a whirlwind pace, Kersefontein is a throwback to times most people only read about in books. It's a place where old traditions flow effortlessly into everyday life.

Found on the bank of the Berg River in the Sandveld region of the Cape West Coast,

between the historic village of Hopefield and the coastal fishing town of Velddrif, Kersefontein was purchased by Martin Melck in 1770. For eight generations, the farm has been handed down to the sons, with Julian Melck the present owner. Farmer, qualified advocate, pilot and musician are just some of the credentials of this multi-faceted character, who has been described aptly as a modern Renaissance Man.

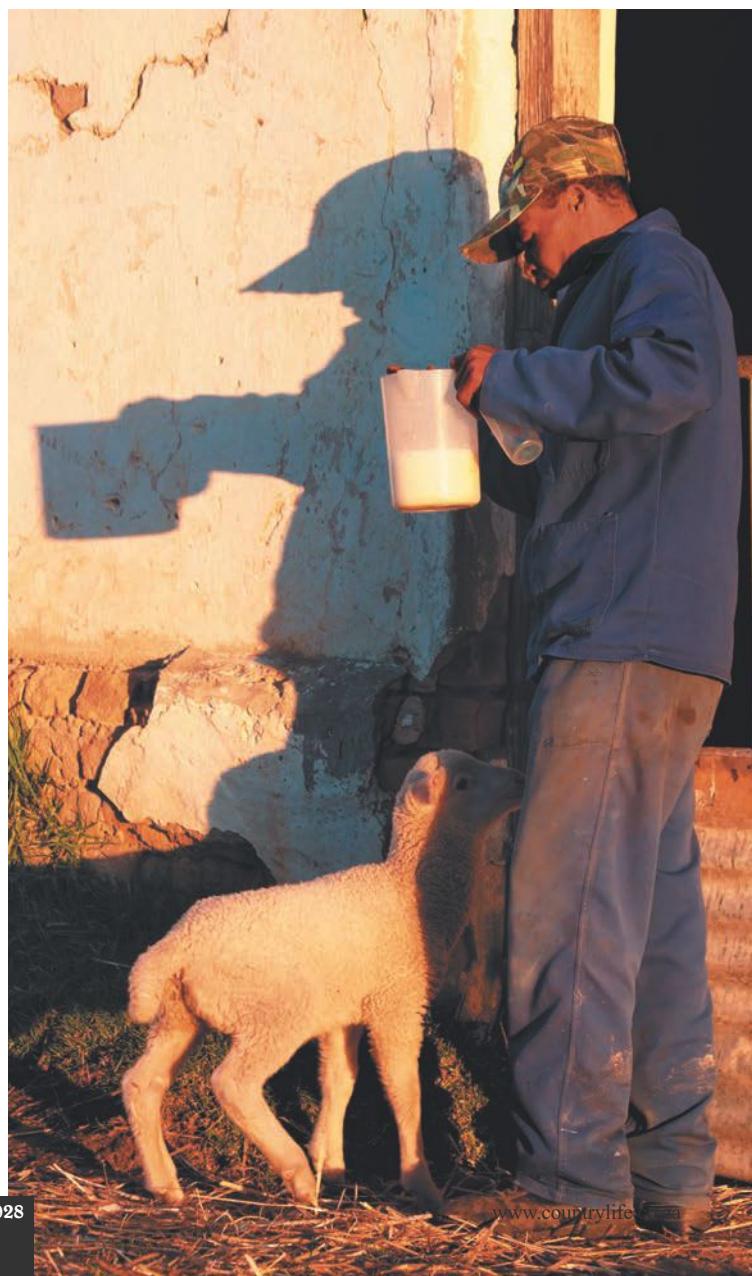
The Cape Dutch homestead, outbuildings and farmyard form the hub of the daily ins and outs of the farm people and their families,

friends who pop in, guests who stay over, film crews who seek out the patina of this place grown beautiful with age, as well the chickens, pigs, horses, cows and sheep.

A quirky course of events led to South Africa becoming the first country outside Europe to own merinos. In 1789, the King of Spain, who had the sole right to send merinos out of the country, donated two rams and four ewes from his Escorial Merino Stud to the Netherlands. But the inclement Dutch climate did not agree with the woolly aristocrats, and the House of Orange passed them on to

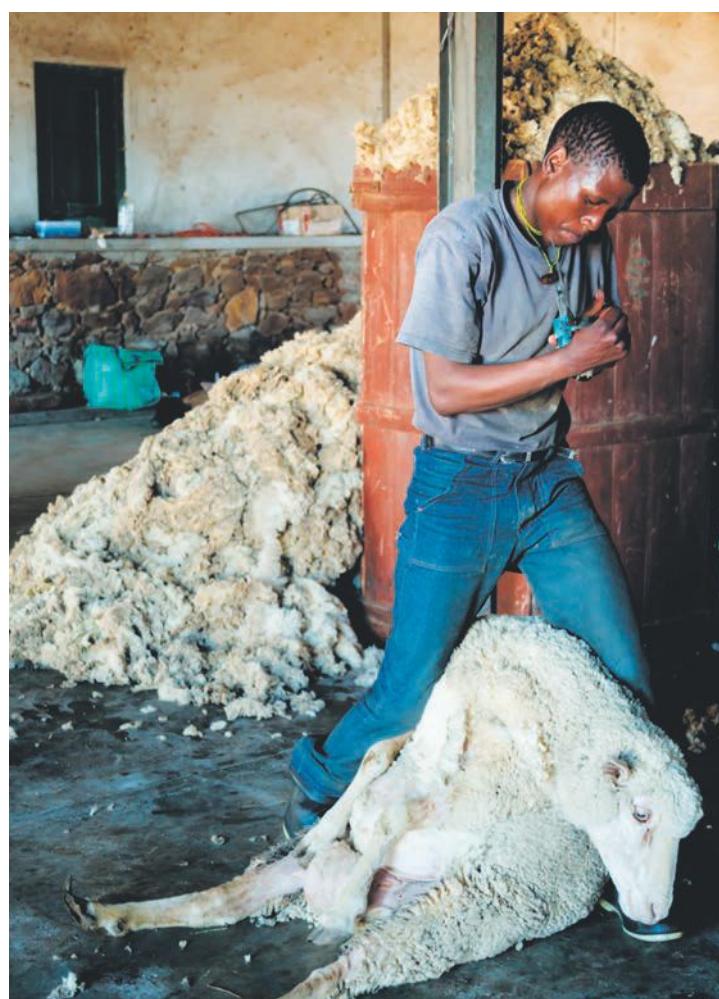


LEFT: Generations of the Melck family have lived in Kersefontein's old manor house and farmed the 6 000ha farm, contributing to a living history in this part of the Cape West Coast. BELOW LEFT: The main tools of the trade – flame-sharp blade shears. BELOW: A *hanslammertjie* (orphaned lamb) impatiently waits to be given milk from a *tietiebottle* (baby's bottle).





ABOVE: The sheep is first gripped between the legs of the shearer and the belly wool is shorn, then the animal is tipped to its side to remove the fleece. BELOW: Regular sharpening of the blades is essential, and it gives the shearer a welcome breather from the intense work of shearing. RIGHT: The speed and dexterity of a skilled shearer determines the number of sheep he can shear per day, the absence of cuts to the sheep and the quality of the fleece.





ABOVE: The fleece is thrown on to the wool table and skirted, which means that off-colour wool and smaller pieces are removed so that the fleece can be rolled. ABOVE RIGHT: The activities in the shearing shed are like a synchronised dance, with shearers, floor sweepers, shed hands and wool sorters all performing with great gusto. RIGHT: Julian Melck 'doing the books' in the shearing shed with Coty the Weimaraner for company.

Colonel Jacob Gordon, military commander of the Cape. An interesting anecdote is that Gordon visited Kersefontein in December 1785 where he made a sketch of the farm that is now in the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam.

Gordon recognised the unique opportunity and proceeded to breed a pure merino race on the southern tip of Africa. By the time the faux pas had to be rectified and the sheep sent back to Spain, there were enough offspring to ensure the future of the South African merino breed and to lay the foundation of an internationally recognised wool industry.

As one of the oldest agricultural industries in the country, it earns foreign currency in a competitive world market. Interestingly, Australia received its first merinos from the Cape Colony during British rule, kick-starting what would become the biggest sheep and wool industry in the world.

At Kersefontein, more than a thousand Dohne merino sheep are shorn twice every year, a process that lasts for almost a week, depending on the weather. The Dohne merino was locally bred specifically for a sourveld environment, and is a breed that produces soft white wool as well as meat. Delays of the shearing are possible, as wet sheep cannot be sheared. It is the seasons that sway the rhythms of this working farm.

Come spring, when the Sandveld is carpeted with wildflowers, and in late summer when the landscape is painted in shades of wheat and buff, the farm's pulse rises to tango tempo with the arrival of the sheep-shearing team. This crew of men, highly skilled in the



art of shearing, wool skirting, classing and baling, travels from one farm to the next to fulfil an age-old farming practice of removing the fleece from the sheep. Members of the team hail from as far afield as Lesotho, and are led by a 'captain', who liaises with the farmer, and takes responsibility for his colleagues.

The shearing process starts with the farmhands on horseback, rounding up the sheep and bringing them into the holding pen adjacent to the shearing shed. These are adroit horsemen, most of them from families that have been on the farm for generations, riding horses that also work the Hereford cattle on the farm. Julian himself is also a rider, and breeds Boerperde on a small scale, continuing a tradition started by his forefathers in the early 19th century.

An individual sheep is caught in the holding pen and the remonstrating animal is brought to the shearer's station in the shed where the tools of his trade are set out: blade shears and sharpening stone. Like scissors,

the shears have two blades but with the hinge nearest to the opposite end of the sharp points. With this tool the skilled hand shearer delivers a neat and clean cut without damaging the fleece or the sheep. Part of the shearing ritual is the regular sharpening of the blades on a sharpening stone.

If there is a sheep farm lurking somewhere in your past, being at Kersefontein during the shearing season triggers all kinds of nostalgic sensations and emotions. South Africa is unique in that it still practises blade shearing on a large scale, and this heightens the sense of witnessing a ritual many generations old. Other wool-producing countries mostly use electrical shearers and the fact that, for them, hand shearing is a dying art, is wistfully bemoaned.

No wonder then that South Africa dominates the blade-shearing category in international shearing competitions. Our two-man team of Mayenseke Shweni and Zweliwile Hans were crowned 2014 blade-shearing world champions. In the words of

South Africa is unique in that it still practises blade shearing on a large scale, and this heightens the sense of witnessing a ritual many generations old

Mayenseke: "With the blade you control the sheep through its skin, which is much more comfortable for the sheep. I love to shear with blades."

It is this sentiment that translates into the poetry of motion once the shearer sits and grips the sheep between his legs and deftly starts shearing, first the belly and head, then the legs, then the fleece (back), his skill measured by the absence of nicks to the sheep's body, a minimum of stress to the sheep, a neat and clean-cut fleece, and the speed of the operation. A shearer shears between 40 to 45 sheep per day. Shearers

are paid per sheep, so there's quite a hum of energy in the shed.

The sweepers join in the dance with their witch-like brooms, constantly clearing wool tufts from the large expanse of floor. Eager to escape, shorn sheep are steered into a second pen where a somewhat quiet lot seem to contemplate their back and sides. From here the sheep are returned to the fields and the ewes are reunited with their lambs.

The fleece is taken to the wool table where, with a nonchalant flick of the wrist, it is thrown onto the slats that are spaced about 12 millimetres apart. Small pieces of

wool and bits of debris, such as thorns and dust, fall through the slats to the floor. The wool-skirter tidies up the fleece by removing dirt and dried manure, and the classer is responsible for grading the wool according to its length and fineness. This is done by sight and feel. When this process is complete the wool is placed into wooden crates, or the wool press, and then pressed into bales, which are weighed and marked once they are full.

At the end of each day, Julian counts the tokens each individual shearer has collected and kept after each sheep shorn, and the kraal of shorn sheep is also counted and verified by Julian and the team captain.

All too soon the week runs out, the job is done and the shearers pack up their tools and belongings to move on to the next farm. Next year they will be back, and the year after, and the year after... ■

Kersefontein Guest Farm

022 783 0850, www.kersefontein.co.za

Map reference F2 see inside back cover



LEFT: Clean cut! The shorn sheep huddle together, looking somewhat bedraggled.
BELLOW: Inspired by the rhythm of the occasion, guest at Kersefontein Riana van der Gryp spins into an impromptu dance with one of the shearers.



Did You Know?

- The merino sheep has the highest production per head, yielding 3-5kg particularly in dry regions like the Sandveld.
- The South African merino has been bred for minimal skin folds, which improves yield and makes shearing more efficient.
- Merino fleece is soft and is bright white, which allows it to be easily dyed in any fashion colour. As a result Cape wool is in high demand, the bulk exported to Europe, America and the Far East.



Rainbow and brown trout lurk in the still, quiet waters of Gubu Dam outside Stutterheim.

Once Upon a Forest

Stutterheim certainly has a tense history but is now quite the magnet for nature lovers

WORDS AND PICTURES MARION WHITEHEAD

Getting the churches to ring their bells simultaneously for ten minutes for a good cause just takes a little good-natured cheek in a small town where everyone knows each other. Same goes for disrupting the town's entire business district by driving around in a car swathed in pink ribbons, escorted by traffic police on motorbikes blaring sirens as you raise funds for charity.

"It's the kind of thing this town does when a crisis hits," says Rotary Club's Di Blom with the friendly exuberance that made such a success of Stutterheim's

Pink Trees for Pauline cancer fundraising project. Last year the local beneficiary was a six-year-old with leukaemia. "Stutterheim is a caring community. We all pull together here," Di says of the Eastern Cape town that received international acclaim in the early 1990s – before apartheid was abolished – for building bridges and mending relations between the races.

Stutterheim has a tense history, as it was one of the flashpoints during the 100 years of the Cape Frontier Wars, when the Xhosa nation fought Britain for this beautiful tract of land at the foot of the Amathole Mountains. The Germans who were settled here in the

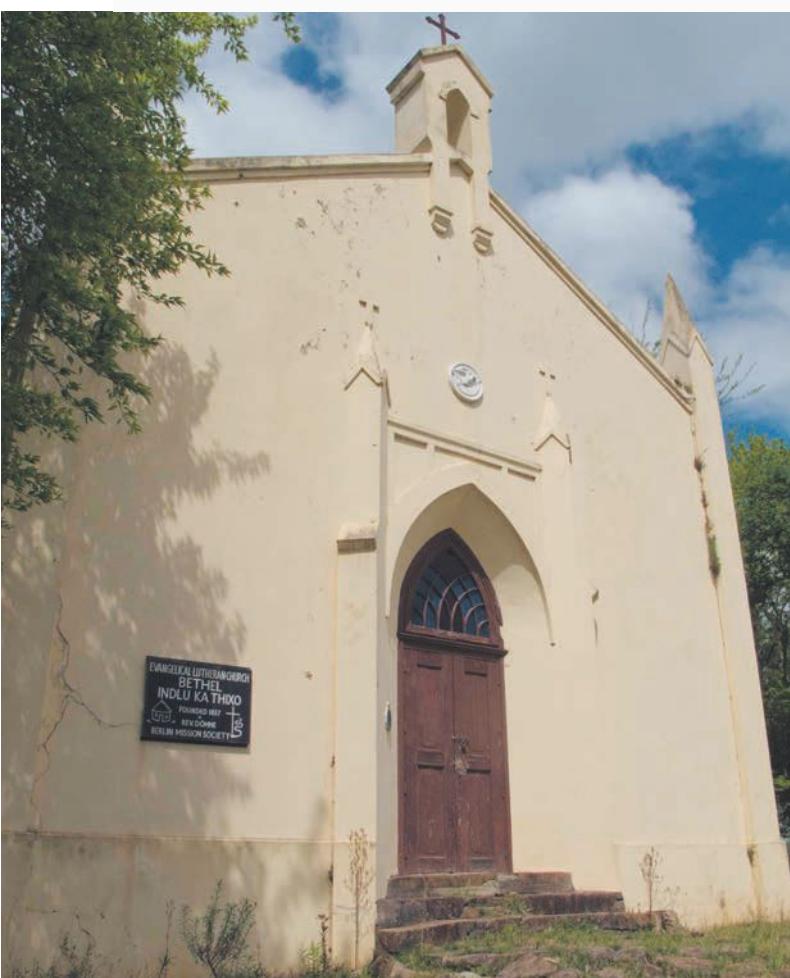
1850s, under the command of Baron von Stutterheim, were a tough, hardworking lot.

My own forebears were among those who raced for refuge in the little St Barnabas church in town, shared by the English and German communities in those early days. Amid the chaos of that bumpy wagon ride, great-great granny Manthe gave birth to a son – and they both survived.

Stutterheim's heritage trail starts at the first church in the area, the Bethel Mission Station that Pastor Jacob Ludwig Döhne built in 1837 for the Berlin Missionary Society. Sorrow struck when his wife Bertha died in childbirth and her infant son followed her four



ABOVE: The wheelchair-friendly boardwalk from the main picnic site in the Xholora Forest is a good spot for birding. BELOW LEFT: The Bethel Mission Church is the oldest church in Stutterheim. BELOW RIGHT: The Stutterheim community rallied to wrap their trees in pink to raise funds to fight cancer.





LEFT: Cows and sheep are virtually your only company on back roads such as this one outside Stutterheim. ABOVE: Xhosa Chief Sandile is guarded for all eternity by two colonial soldiers who perished in the same Frontier War skirmish in 1879. BELOW: The Merrifield Mile swim across the Wriggleswade Dam is a festive occasion, with more than 1 000 swimmers taking part.

months later. On top of this, Döhne's church was torched during the War of the Axe (1846) and he left the area a disillusioned man. His successor, Pastor Albert Kropf, rebuilt the mission church twice and is credited with helping translate the Bible into Xhosa.

Some ten kilometres out of town, with a fine view of Mt Kemp, are three solitary graves under a beautiful spreading oak. In the centre lies rebel Xhosa Chief Sandile, a brave warrior who died in an ambush during the 9th Frontier War (1879) and was buried between two colonial soldiers who perished in the same skirmish, guarded for all eternity so his spirit would not roam and incite his people to rise up again – or so the British wanted the Xhosa to believe.

But the days of conflict are over and today it's the adventure activities in the thick indigenous Xholora Forest cloaking the slopes of the Amathole Mountains that draw visitors to the area. Water sports on the outlying dams are popular, with big-bass fishing tournaments hosted at the 1 000-hectare Wriggleswade Dam, where motor boating and skiing are allowed. "And the annual Merrifield Mile in February attracts more than 1 000 swimmers," says Lyndon Hall, secretary of the Stutterheim Aquatic Club, as he stands on the deck of the clubhouse that has seen numerous raucous parties.

But if you're wanting a quiet spot to cast your fly, head west of town. "Our biggest secret attraction is Gubu Dam," confides Simone Flanagan of Croft Guest Cottages in the pretty Xholora valley. This is a haven for flyfishers set on teasing rainbow and brown



trout, and canoeists who slice silently through the water, breaking the dark reflections of pines lining the dam.

Nearby, Natural High Outdoor Adventures scores a bull's eye for family activities in the Xholora valley (formerly spelt Kologha by those who couldn't pronounce the Xhosa name). Tweens and teens get to flex their computer-saturated muscles on the abseiling tower and the challenging obstacle course.

Manager Stan Dugmore confesses to being a nerd at school and is an expert at quietly encouraging youngsters to overcome their fears. "Anyone can have fun with archery," he says, demonstrating how to load an arrow onto a bow for my first attempt at this ancient art. I take aim and am chuffed to actually hit the target – and have visions



Di Blom went pink and drove around town using a loudhailer to raise funds for the Pink Trees for Pauline campaign last year.



TOP LEFT: The Shire eco-chalets look a little like giant mushrooms on the edge of the forest. TOP RIGHT: Rob Scott admits to breaking a few panes of glass while bending them to fit his curved eco-chalets. ABOVE LEFT: Natural High instructor Gavinelia Stride and manager Stan Dugmore show off their archery skills. ABOVE RIGHT: Marked hiking trails minimise the chance of getting lost in the thick indigenous forest outside Stutterheim.

of finding my own Robin Hood when my arrows hit the bull's eye twice.

The back roads through the forest to the timber plantations are great places for mountain bikers to crank up a good sweat and are also used by riders from Hillside Horses on outrides. I branch off onto a trail into the forest to look for the Knysna Turacos I'd heard calling, but they are feasting so high in the canopy I can't get a good sighting.

Marked hikes into the forest start at the main picnic site and vary from three to seventeen kilometres, ambling past gushing waterfalls. I take my binoculars on a stroll along the wheelchair-friendly boardwalk so I can keep my eyes focused upwards for Cape Parrots, without stumbling on loose stones. Other forest specials to watch out

for include Orange Ground Thrush, White-starred Robin and Bush Blackcap.

I've never seen a Narina Trogon and am most excited when Rob Scott, my host at The Shire Eco Lodge, says he saw them practically every day in the forests surrounding their house. He offers to call up a trogon for me, cupping his hands and making their call, but it isn't my lucky day. I have to be content with observing rare samango monkeys leaping about the canopy from my open-air shower that evening.

I sleep like a baby in one of Rob's eco-chalets, which look like giant mushrooms. He built them of timber from nearby plantations, curving the roofs and walls. Each is a small work of art, as Rob cut every piece of timber himself and laminated the

beams that underlie the curved structure. He even bent tempered glass to fit the curves. "I broke a few panes in the learning process," he admits wryly. The beauty is in the care of every small detail, such as the cupboard and door handles he carved from old sneezewood fence posts.

"My grandfather was a cabinetmaker and I learnt some things from him," says a modest Rob, whose main business is growing unusual indigenous bulbs for collectors around the world – his nursery is fascinating. A keen outdoorsman, Rob can also be persuaded to take groups abseiling down a 90-metre cliff in the forest, or fishing and skiing in his boat on Wriggleswade Dam.

Stutterheim seems to attract creative people with quirky ideas. At Eagles Ridge



Property Peep

- Stutterheim's third supermarket recently opened its doors not far from the town's only traffic light on the N6, and there's a provincial hospital, private pharmacy and good doctors on hand. The local high school regularly achieves a 100 per cent matric pass rate, there's a welcoming retirement complex and a sociable country club with a fine, nine-hole golf course, making this the kind of town that attracts both families and retirees.
- Smallholdings in the highly desirable Xholora valley on the outskirts of town are scarce, says Property Profile's Di Blom, a farmer's daughter born and bred in the district, who also coaches tennis in between her community projects. She's just sold a house on 20-hectares in the valley for R1.6 million.
- In town, expect to pay around R600 000 for a basic two-bedroom home, and from R900 000 for a more upmarket, three-bedroom house with garden and lock-up garage.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Bertha Döhne's grave marker was taken to Croft Cottages for safekeeping when graves were vandalised, says Simone Flanagan; Stutterheim's Engine Museum is filled with old engines, many of them in thumping-good running order; St Barnabas Church was where the German settlers took refuge during the Cape Frontier Wars; Kids at Jack & Jill Educare put on a concert at the Stutterheim Amateur Dramatic Society theatre to raise funds to help a little girl suffering from cancer.

Where to Play

- **Wriggleswade Dam**'s slipway and picnic areas are open to day visitors. Stutterheim Aquatic Club 083 752 4545
- **Gubu Dam** fishing permits: Stutterheim Trout Fishing Club bailiff 043 683 2887
- **Natural High Outdoor Adventures** offers archery, abseiling, obstacle courses, interpretive forest walks and canoeing. 043 683 2046 www.forestway.org.za
- **Hillside Horses** for outrides in the forest. 084 467 5668
- **The Stutterheim Stationary Engine Museum** boasts 140 engines in its collection, many still in working order, all lovingly restored by volunteers. Open by appointment. 043 683 1507, www.stuttengines.co.za
- **Heritage Route sites** that are signposted from the N6 include Bethal Mission Church and Chief Sandile's Grave.





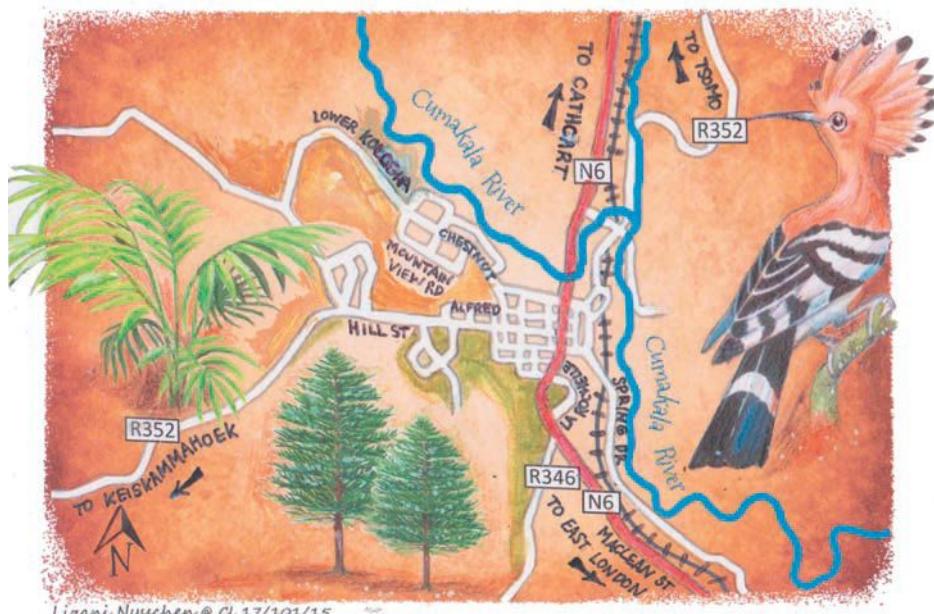
Country House not far away, Alan Steyn and his artist wife Hester have taken an offbeat approach to building their restaurant and function room. Recycling and upcycling materials are second nature to them, and Alan can build a wall out of practically anything, whether it's old bottles or pieces of pipe found lying around.

Floor mosaics of broken tiles are Hester's unique creation and the outer walls are carved with free-flowing relief patterns and shapes in cement, reminiscent of renowned Spanish artist and architect Gaudi. "My son Conraad Strydom the artist did most of it," says Hester, herself a ceramacist who has passed on her skills to local people.

Once every three months, Stutterheim's vibrant community gets together for an all-day market at Eagles Ridge. Stallholders set up in the garden and function rooms: artists, bakers, cheese makers, crafters, pancake tossers – you name it, says Hester. Natural High sets up archery targets on the bowling green and the Presbyterian minister does his Leonard Cohen impersonation, belting out his 'Hallelujah' song. It's a festive time when everyone gets to socialise regardless of their differences.

Says Hester, with a grin, "We are so blessed to live here, we should celebrate it every day." ■

Map reference F6 see inside back cover



TOP LEFT: Innovative couple Hester and Alan Steyn in front of the cement carvings by her son Conraad Strydom. LEFT: Potter Lawukazi Bosman puts the finishing touches to one of her creations at Eagle's Ridge.

Where to Sleep

- **Wriggleswade Dam's caravan park** is run by the Stutterheim Aquatic Club and has waterside sites ideal for fishermen. 083 752 4545
- **The Croft Guest Cottages** in the Xholora valley offer peaceful self-catering chalets that come with a B&B option, along with two en suite rooms attached to the main house. 043 683 2796 croft@haznet.co.za, www.thecroftcottages.co.za
- **Eagles Ridge Country House** has homely rondavel accommodation in a large garden, dotted with sculptures, and great meals with a relaxed vibe. 043 683 2381 info@eaglesridge.co.za, www.eaglesridge.co.za
- **The Shire Eco Lodge** offers a special experience on the edge

of the forest in quirky chalets, ideal for those with romance in mind, or just wanting a peaceful chill spot. 072 364 8077 043 683 2452, rob@shire.co.za, www.shire.co.za

Where to Eat

- **Lizani's Coffee Shop** in Hill Street is tops for light meals and delicious home-made cakes. 076 647 9224
- **Eagles Ridge Restaurant** is a laid-back eatery in the Xholora valley and serves tasty dinners made with whatever is in season. Start with sundowners on the upstairs deck with forest views. 043 683 2381
- **Manderson Hotel**, also in Xholora valley, offers a fine forest view to go with tea, sandwiches and cakes. 043 683 2322, www.manderson.co.za

The impressive interpretive centre at the entrance to Mapungubwe National Park.
BELOW: One of the many picturesque rocky outcrops that dot Mapungubwe National Park.



Place of Jackals and the *Wisdom Stone*

Wonders of nature and a compelling history have conspired over the years to turn the Mapungubwe landscape into a hotbed of intrigue and natural treasures

WORDS LEON MARSHALL PICTURES BY LEON MARSHALL AND CAROLINE KRUGER





Follow the N1's curves through the Soutpansberg or pass it along the R521 where it flattens out in the west, and before you unfolds the landscape of Greater Mapungubwe, which straddles South Africa's border with Zimbabwe and Botswana, and is filled with surprises.

At the heart of it is Mapungubwe National Park. The 30 000-hectare park anchors the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area (600 000 hectares), which extends to protected zones on both sides of the Shashe River that separates Botswana and Zimbabwe, as it sweeps down from the north to its meeting

with the Limpopo River. With the addition of sizeable private reserves on the South African side, and conservation projects in progress in Botswana and Zimbabwe, it is a cross-border scheme rich in promise.

Dinosaurs once roamed there, Stone-Age beings chipped their way into mankind's ancestry and San painted their haunting pictures on rock walls, all adding to the region's mystique. But with Mapungubwe started a history that still resonates with today's Southern Africa.

It goes back a thousand years to when kings ensconced on the hilltop – from which the park takes its name – presided over a remarkably structured African community for Southern Africa at the time. They left behind the famed gold-plated rhino, and a golden sceptre and beads, for archaeologists to puzzle over.

Their legacy served to get the area proclaimed a World Heritage Site. Politically they gave cause to African-renaissance President Thabo Mbeki's government to splurge on a posh interpretive centre for proving the long-ago sophistication of African settlements in the region.

For all this, the name Mapungubwe then kicks up this oddity. Some declare it to mean 'Place of the Stone of Wisdom'. Others say it means 'Place of Jackals'.

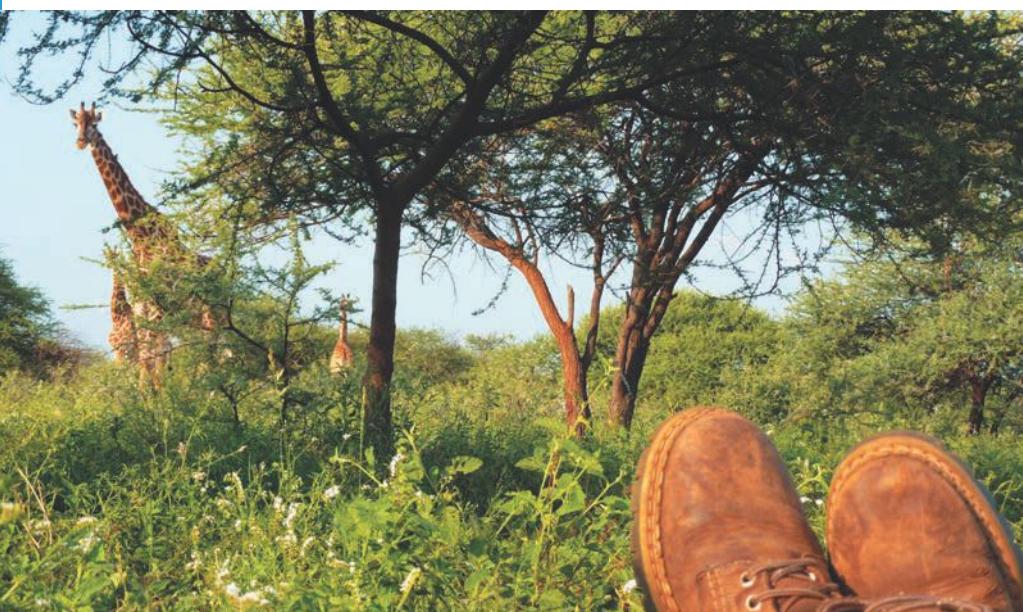
Across the Limpopo on the Botswana side, the transfrontier scheme takes in the 70 000-hectare Northern Tuli Game Reserve. The group of wildlife estates is the legacy of Cecil Rhodes who, in the late 19th century in pursuit of his dream of linking the Cape to Cairo, created the corridor between the then Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The area was later divided into farms for British settlement, to halt the Boer Republic's expansion.

Further north is Zimbabwe's most tangible contribution to the conservation scheme in the shape of the 50 000-hectare Tuli Circle that cuts across the Shashe River into Botswana. It was crafted by Rhodes to keep the locals' cattle at a radius of 16 kilometres from his outspan to prevent his oxen from contracting animal disease.

In June 2006, dignitaries from South Africa stepped over the trickle that was the Limpopo River – at the point in the dry Limpopo-Shashe river bed where the three



ABOVE: A Western Olive Toad which just loves the semi-arid conditions north of the Soutpansberg.
LEFT: Mapungubwe's rocky outcrops line the Limpopo River on its passage eastwards. BELOW: Giraffe-spotting from a leisurely angle in the Mapungubwe bushveld – game viewing couldn't get any better.





countries meet – to join the signing of the memorandum of understanding to create the transfrontier reserve.

Now, Patience Gandiwa, the project's international coordinator, wants to get the treaty signed to formalise the arrangement. She let me know by email from Harare that the cross-border conservation and tourism arrangements have been firmed up enough to do so.

It was at the signing ceremony of 2006 that I chanced upon another of the region's surprises. It concerned an island in the confluence of the two rivers, that had a cottage rumoured to be a hideout for crooks. A delegate from Botswana named Hendrik Coetzer told me the real story.

On the island was a large Bechuanaland farm Coetzer's father had bought in 1952. It wasn't clear which country it belonged to, which prompted his father to declare it the Independent State of Shasheland. That moved the British colonial government forthwith to declare it part of Bechuanaland.

But it is south of the Limpopo where history played its weirdest tricks. It saw one of the most bitter Nat-Sap clashes over whether to establish a park there.

Recently, Mapungubwe's propensity for controversy had conservationists and neighbouring landowners calling themselves the Save Mapungubwe Coalition, and fight a losing battle against coal mining close to the border. The mining company got the

ABOVE LEFT: The colourful mopane worm that is a meal for some and an object of research for others.

ABOVE: Visitors enjoy a spot of bird and game viewing from the deck of the Mogalakwena River Lodge. RIGHT: Is it a rock or is it a giant tortoise peering out from under its shell? BELOW RIGHT: An eye-catching specimen of Greater Mapungubwe's bird riches is the Malachite Kingfisher.



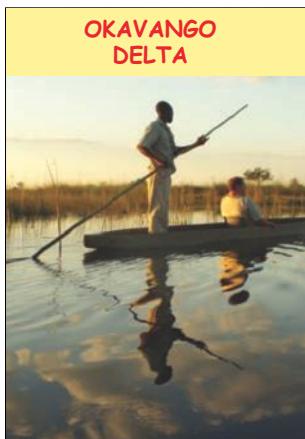
go-ahead by entering into a 'biodiversity offset agreement' with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and SANParks, whereby it will pay R55-million over 25 years, to be spent on the park.

Whether the anti-mining campaign had anything to do with it, there has since taken root a new community spirit in the shape of an organisation called the Greater Mapungubwe Network. The livewires behind it are Wendy Collinson, project executant of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's wildlife and roads project, Rox Brummer of Green Dogs Conservation that provides dogs to keep



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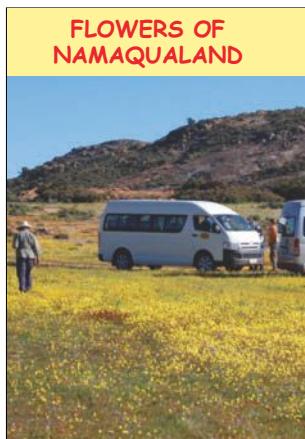
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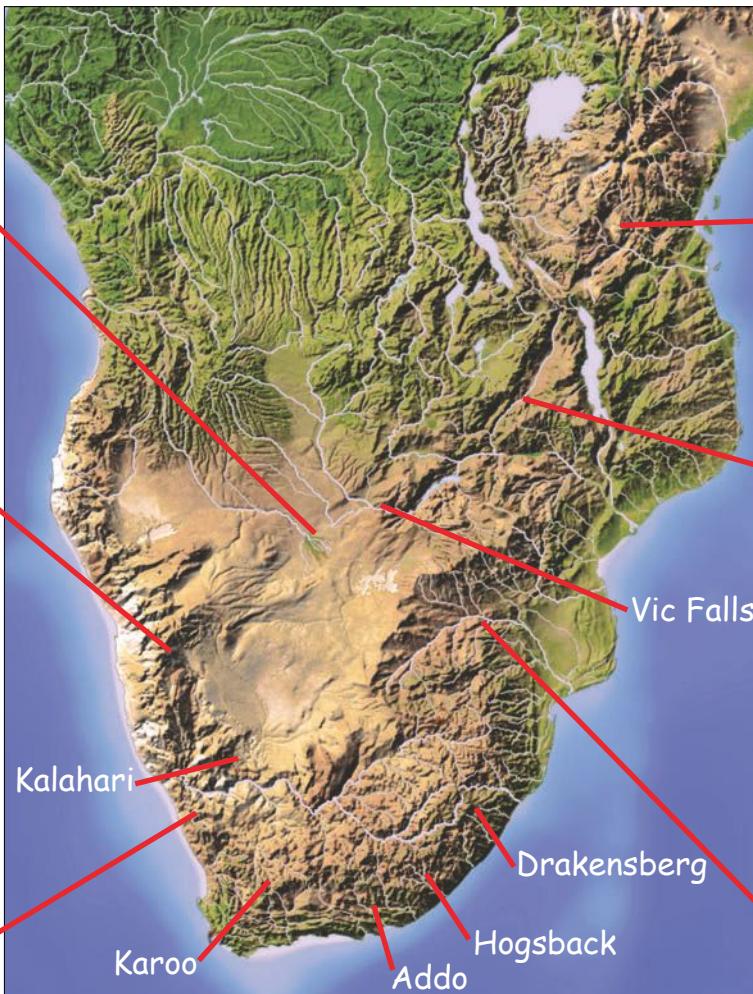
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NAMIBIA - CAPRIVI & THE DESERTS



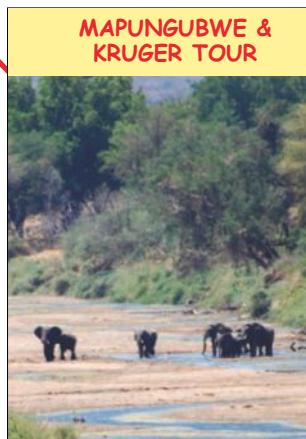
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LEFT: The Mogalakwena River flows past its namesake River Lodge on its way to joining the Limpopo River. ABOVE: The three livewires behind the Greater Mapungubwe Network – from left, Caroline Kruger, Wendy Collinson and Rox Brummer, with the adoring family dog, a German short-haired pointer named Barclay.

“They must stop saying it is your lion that’s come onto my place, or it is my lion... They must start talking about our lion... Farmers are already getting there. Rather than shoot predators, most now call and we provide dogs to drive them off

livestock safe from predators, and Caroline Kruger, manager of the Mogalakwena Research Centre.

Four years ago, they initiated a meeting that had about 50 people attending, including representatives of SANParks, plus the transfrontier-park committee and De Beers, whose enormous open-cast Venetia diamond mine has a 36 000-hectare nature reserve attached to it.

Wendy paints the picture. “We found people to be passionate about the area... The vision was to share ideas and information... We now have about

500 members, four meetings a year and a regular newsletter... It’s not only about wildlife. Presentations will, for instance, also be about how to set up a blog...”

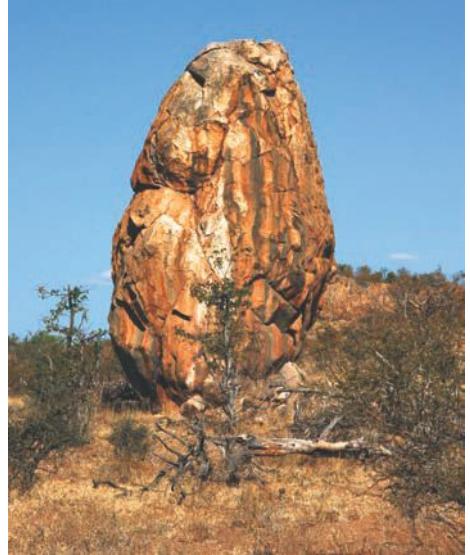
The three were later described to me as the ‘Mapungubwe Google’ by Coba Rohm, manager of Mopane Bush Lodge. “You want to know something, that’s where you will find out.”

The network helps coordinate the region’s plethora of research projects, ranging from mopane worms and trapdoor spiders to lion, elephant and community aspects. Just how taken academia is with

the region is underscored by the presence of two major research centres, one named Lajuma and the other Mogalakwena.

Wendy intimated that behind the network lurks a bigger ideal. “We have started to work together and share ideas. The breakthrough will come when the fences come down. People must get a collective idea of ownership... They must stop saying it is your lion that’s come onto my place, or it is my lion... They must start talking about our lion...”

Added Rox, “Farmers are already getting there. Rather than shoot predators,



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The Mapungubwe forest boardwalk that leads to a bird hide on the banks of the Limpopo was washed away during a flood and not yet fixed when visited at the end of 2014; An owl-shaped rock stands sentry in the eastern part of Mapungubwe National Park; Under giant nyala trees, Mapungubwe's enchanting tented camp is close to the Limpopo River; Patience Gandiwa, international coordinator of the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area, who is keen to see faster progress with the scheme.



On the Political Football Fields

The Mapungubwe saga goes back to the 1920s, when the region was buffeted by National Party-South African Party politics, as the power tussle between the National Party (Nat) and the old South African Party (Sap) and its successor, the United Party (UP) went on in those years.

Prominent historian Jane Carruthers, in a paper titled *Battle of Dongola*, describes how the issue generated some of the most acrimonious parliamentary debates and one of the biggest select-committee reports of the time.

In 1922, Prime Minister Jan Smuts had his Sap government set aside land as a botanical reserve. He did so at the behest of Dr Iltiyd Buller Pole Evans, a botanist from Britain who worked for the Department of Agriculture. They became friends due to their shared love of nature.

AB Emery, the manager of a copper mine at Musina, helped choose the farms, including his own, for what was named the Dongola Botanical Reserve. He was appointed honorary caretaker by Pole Evans, who described the reserve as "fit for nature, nature left alone as man first saw it, in balanced equilibrium".

Smuts lost the 1924 election to the National Party of Barry Hertzog, who was taken enough with the reserve to add another farm to it. It was when

Smuts returned to power in 1939, by defeating Hertzog in a parliamentary vote in favour of joining the Allies in the war against Nazi Germany, that the idea of upgrading the reserve to a national park took off.

Pole Evans did the pushing. He told Smuts that the administrations of then Rhodesia and Bechuanaland were interested in establishing an international game reserve that would straddle the Limpopo Valley. This so appealed to Smuts's love of nature and his vision of creating a united states of Southern Africa that he had his government add more farms to the reserve.

But there was so much bitterness over the war issue that the National Parks Board, at the instigation of a Nationalist, refused to take it over, arguing that the region was too arid and that the reserve would offer nothing more than nearby Kruger National Park.

It did not help that Smuts's Minister of Lands, Andrew Conroy, was in charge of the project. Already no favourite of the Nationalists, he forged ahead, announcing plans to buy more farms for what he renamed the Dongola Wildlife Sanctuary.

Objections came from outside Nationalist ranks as well. Even Emery organised vociferously against the park after Pole Evans scolded him for bringing his livestock into the reserve during a drought.

most now call and we provide dogs to drive them off."

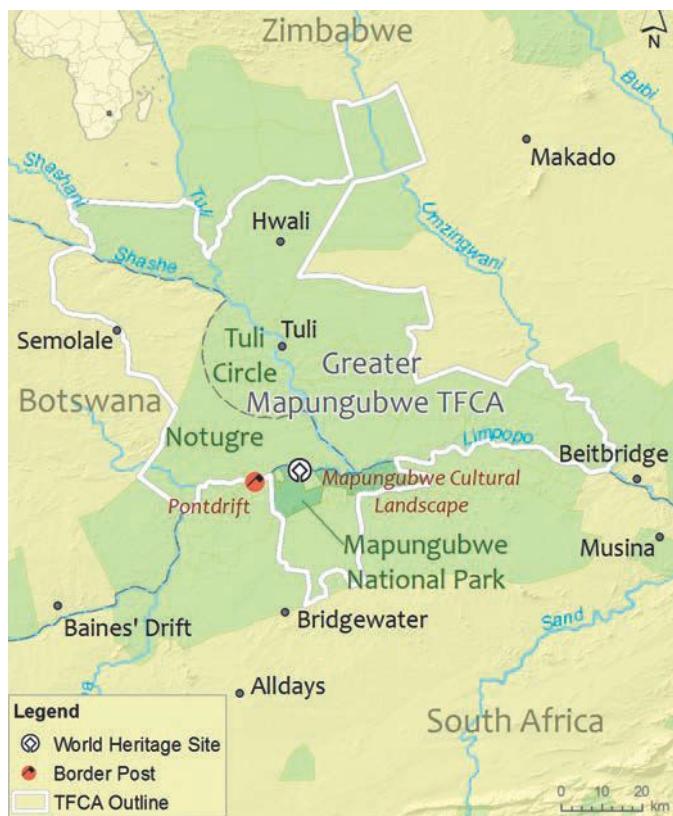
Later that day I gazed across Venetia's gaping hole that was dug after a visiting geologist in the 1970s noticed a kimberlite rock used as a doorstop for a pit toilet. I was given a ride on a mammoth truck

that trundled up the incline to deliver 235 tonnes of rock to the crusher where a tiny handful of diamonds might be retrieved.

That night I was woken in Mapungubwe's tented camp on the bank of the Limpopo by a cacophony of lion

roaring, elephant shrieking and the insane laughter of hyena. I knew not what caused the commotion, but it was exhilarating to think that it was happening much as it would have, in times before human boundaries were drawn. ■

Map reference A7 see inside back cover



A select committee appointed to hear submissions took two years to produce a 1 500-page report. The major objection listed was the alienation of agricultural land for wildlife purposes. It was a remarkable turn, notes Carruthers, as the farmers had initially succeeded in getting the government to reduce the price of the land on the grounds that it was such worthless farmland.

The Nationalists accused Smuts of internationalism for wanting to co-operate with Bechuanaland and Rhodesia in expanding the park across the Limpopo. American support for the project was counter-productive as, to Smuts's detractors, it fitted with his tendency to strut the world stage rather than tend to home problems.

Objections were raised to the fact that Africans had been consulted about the park and that they had declared their support for it. Opposition was stirred in the Afrikaans community as well, by questioning the bilingual abilities of the officials who stood to be deployed to the park.

Despite all, the Smuts government passed the Dongola Wildlife Sanctuary Act in 1947 to give the reserve national park status. It became a hot issue in the following year's election, which Smuts lost. This resulted in DF Malan's new Nationalist government immediately stopping funding for the reserve, and the next year repealing the Dongola Wildlife Sanctuary Act after a bitter debate.

Handy Contacts

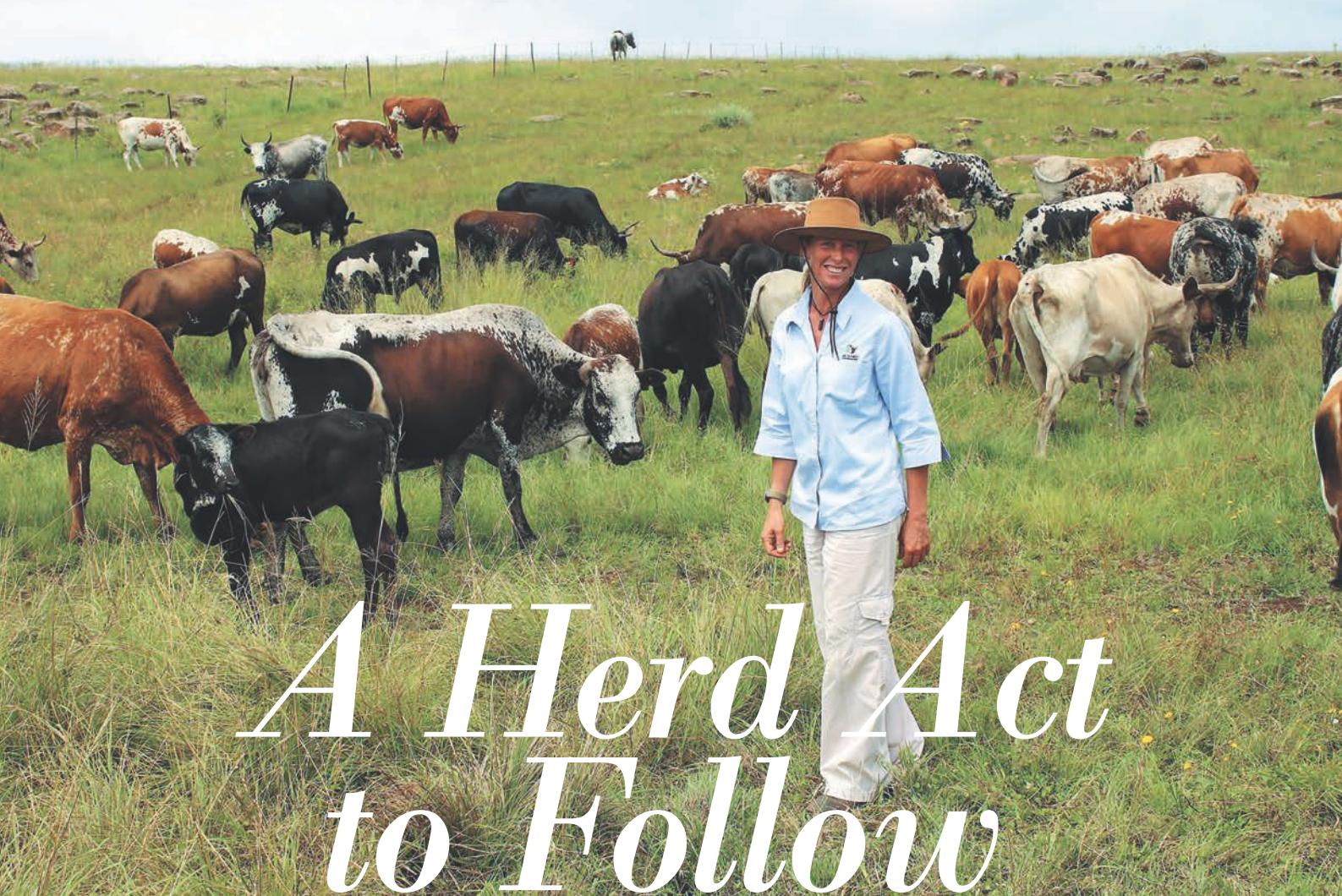
- **Greater Mapungubwe Network**
082 492 0884, bkl@limpopo.co.za, www.dumelangmusina.co.za
- **Endangered Wildlife Trust** 073 596 1673, wendyc@ewt.org.za
www.ewt.org.za
- **Green Dogs Conservation**
072 640 9388, rox@greendogsconservation.com
www.greendogsconservation.com
- **Mogalakwena Research Centre**
072 905 4349, research@mogalakwena.com, www.researchlimpopo.com
- **Mogalakwena River Lodge**
072 123 0505, info@mogalakwena.com, www.mogalakwena.com
- **Lajuma Research Centre**
021 402 0259, leopard@lajuma.com, www.lajuma.com
- **Mopane Bush Lodge** 015 534 7906, mopanebushlodge@limpopo.co.za
www.mopanebushlodge.co.za
- **Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve**
015 575 265, 053 839 4455, venetia.reserve@debeersgroup.com
www.diamondroute.co.za/sites_venetia
- **Mapungubwe National Park**
015 534 7923/24, mapungubwe@saparks.org
www.sanparks.co.za/parks/mapungubwe/

The farms were returned to their owners. Only one, called Greefswald, on which archaeologists were conducting their Mapungubwe excavations, was retained. Even the botanical reserve established back in 1922 was scrapped.

Carruthers writes, 'Perhaps a little surprisingly, there was no great public outcry in response to the 'breach of faith' as the Wildlife Society called it. Settlers returned to carp about the poor farming conditions of the area, Emery to entertain his friends with shooting parties and dances at Skutwater (his farm) – indeed it was soon as though nothing had ever disturbed the tranquility of the far north-western Transvaal'.

The park idea refused to die. In 1976 the administrator of the then Transvaal province added two farms to Greefswald and proclaimed it the Vhembe Nature Reserve (now the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve). The following year, in keeping with the place's quirky history, Greefswald was turned into a military base and a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts.

Ironically, again, it was mining company De Beers that set the park back on course. Having created a nature reserve from land owned by its Venetia diamond mine, De Beers suggested that the long-disputed area adjoining it be turned back into a national park. This came about under the Mandela administration in 1998. ■



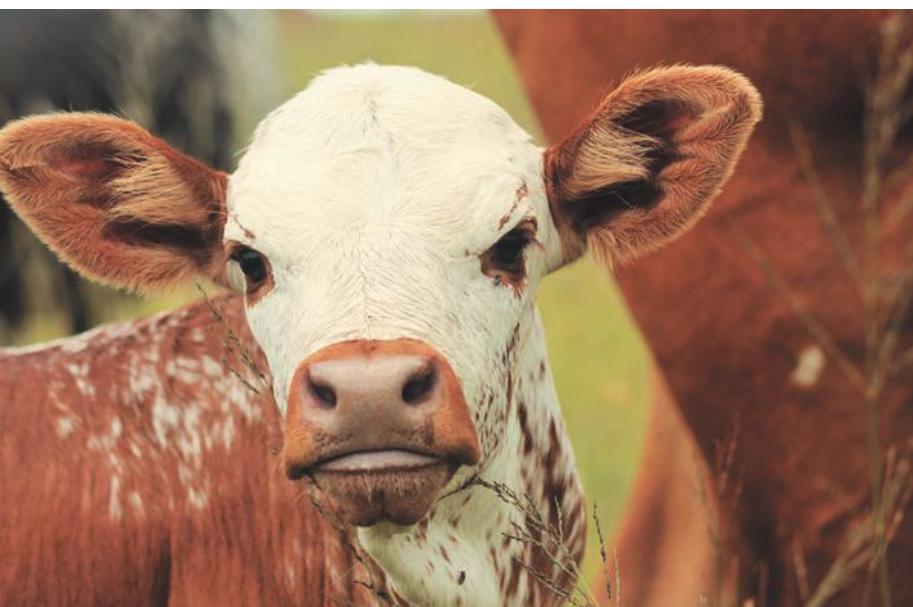
A Herd Act to Follow

In the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, Nguni cattle have been drafted in to save the fragile mistbelt grasslands

WORDS ANDREA ABBOTT PICTURES ANDREA ABBOTT AND SUPPLIED



TOP: Donna Lay, manager of Dartmoor Farm, with her all-important herd of cherished Ngunis. ABOVE LEFT: In spring and summer, the unusual-looking although not rare *Zaluzianskya natalensis* colours the mistbelt grasslands at Dartmoor. ABOVE RIGHT: The endangered *Watsonia canaliculata* is among the threatened species that occur on Dartmoor.



TOP: A female oribi at Dartmoor. Widespread poaching and dog hunting have almost wiped out this graceful and defenceless little antelope. ABOVE: An inquisitive Nguni calf checks our credentials as we mingle with the herd. BELOW: Dartmoor is an important catchment area. The Nyumvubu River flows into the Mooi and from there into the Tugela.



High on remote Dartmoor we find a pastoral scene: a herd of Nguni cattle, their coats of many patterns lending contrast to the green landscape. Bright-hued, newborn calves, secure in the 188-strong crowd, peep out uncertainly as we mingle with the bovine throng.

In their midst, big daddy Stallone, a muscular, wide-horned fellow with not just a chip but a hell of a bump on his shoulder, holds us in his disconcerting gaze. “He won’t charge, will he?” I ask Donna Lay, manager of Dartmoor which, in case you’re wondering, is not in England but is part of the 3 275ha Karkloof Nature Reserve in the KZN Midlands.

Stallone, I’m reassured, has a stare far worse than his charge. Still, Ngunis are known for extreme protectiveness of their young and for their herd loyalty. “It’s not easy to separate them,” Donna says. This is evident when herdsmen and mounted rangers join forces and attempt to isolate a calf that requires an injection.

In a trice, the one-for-all and all-for-one principle kicks in. Tightly packed, shoulder to shoulder, the herd morphs into an impenetrable wall of muscle that surges this way and that, all the while bellowing oaths at the perceived assailants. I feel as if I’m caught up in a Wild West movie. Eventually, calf is caught, muti administered, and he’s released to join the herd that, insulted, hotfoots it down the hill to other pastures.

Ngunis, South Africa’s indigenous breed of cattle, are very much the in thing these days, their colour patterns making them a popular subject for artists, writers, interior decorators and photographers. But the Dartmoor herd is about more than pretty faces and eye-catching coats. They’re a key part of the latest project by the Wildlands Conservation Trust, a KZN-based NGO that, in just a decade, has grown to become a major force in the national arena of biodiversity protection and community-based, poverty-alleviation programmes.

Their projects are many and varied and range from fitting rhinos with tracking devices to providing a platform for ‘treepreneurs’ in impoverished communities

to grow indigenous trees and trade them for goods such as food, building materials, bicycles, solar panels, and rainwater tanks.

The Dartmoor Nguni project falls within the organisation's recently established Farming the Wild intervention, whose purpose is to develop viable businesses on conservation land in ways that help protect the ecological integrity of that land. In the case of the rich, biodiverse Dartmoor farm that Wildlands bought in 2010, to expand the Karkloof reserve.

"An important area of Midlands mistbelt grassland is protected there," says Kevin McCann, the organisation's deputy director of conservation SPACE (Species, People and Conservation of the Environment). "This grassland type has lost 80 per cent of its original extent in other areas of the province. Those irreplaceable grasslands aside, Dartmoor is also important as a water-catchment area. It lies in the upper catchments of two provincially strategic river systems, the uMngeni and uThukela. Both have a large number of downstream users, including the major urban centres of Hillcrest, Pinetown and Durban."

Other significant environmental assets are extensive wetland areas and a variety of threatened species. These include the endangered oribi antelope and Wattled Crane, and some increasingly rare wild flowers, among them *Watsonia canaliculata*, *Dierama luteoalbidum* and *Cryptocarya myrtifolia*.

As happens in nature, all these various elements are interconnected, and without one another might vanish. This is where the Ngunis come in. Their role is not so much to generate income (although they do that too), but to perform the vital ecological function of keeping the grasslands intact. Cattle as conservation tools might seem a far-fetched idea, but it's not unheard of. "It's the first time Wildlands is using cattle in this way," Kevin says, "but the project is not unique to Dartmoor. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and SANParks have in the past explored and used cattle in protected areas as a conservation-management tool."

The idea pivots on the fact that regular grazing keeps grasslands in good shape. At Dartmoor, a key grass species is the highly palatable (when young) red grass,



ABOVE: Stallone, the big daddy of the herd, holds us in his disconcerting gaze.

Themeda triandra, which is one of the most important grazing grasses in Southern Africa. As a decrease grass it's abundant in good veld but decreases when the veld is under- or overgrazed.

"When we began managing Dartmoor three years ago," Donna says, "our focus was on removing countless snares, including gin traps, and stamping out illegal dog hunting – factors that had virtually decimated the oribi population as well as other grazers." Too few oribi and other antelope meant the red grass was not being utilised properly. This created a vicious cycle: ungrazed, the grass continued to grow while decreasing in palatability, to ultimately become moribund and thus lost.

Then, because of the accrued mass of combustible material, the risk of hazardous

runaway fires increased significantly. In fact, late in 2014, on the eve of the arrival of the Ngunis, a massive fire swept through Dartmoor and neighbouring farms, destroying about 1 500 hectares of veld.

I'd heard of the intensive grazing, no-burn approach that claims to perform wonders such as prevent desertification, and capture carbon and store it in grassland soils for thousands of years. But I'd also heard opposing views, for example that such claims are unfounded and also that the trampling impact of mobs of heavy-hoofed cattle is detrimental to soils, water storage and plant productivity. Controlled burning, the latter camp argues, is the way to go.

Donna explains that managed burns will be done at Dartmoor, but that the Ngunis play a complementary role. A smaller breed



ABOVE: Lauren van Nijkerk, strategic marketing manager at Wildlands, and Kevin McCann, deputy director conservation, SPACE, with one of the subjects of Project Rhino Tracker. LEFT: Now that the veld at Dartmoor is improving, Wattled Cranes are returning to the area.



than most other cattle, they're lighter on the land and, being indigenous, are well adapted to the conditions. "They're hardy, economical, resistant to tick-borne diseases, and easier to manage than other breeds," Donna points out.

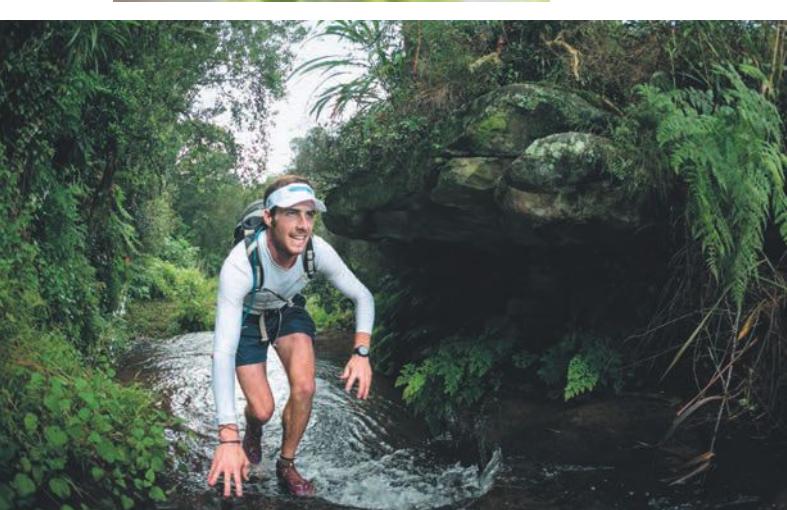
Another benefit is that regular grazing, in keeping the grass short, helps with controlled block burns, and therefore fire management. Essentially, then, the Ngunis are taking on the role of the oribi and other grazers that once occurred in healthy numbers on these mistbelt grasslands. And so, a link in the ecological chain has been more or less restored. Still, how tragic that the true connection has been severed,

ABOVE LEFT: Tree-preneur Ntombikayise Mthembu grows indigenous trees from seed and trades them for commodities like food and building materials. LEFT: Dartmoor is home to all manner of critters. BELOW: The tough, three-day Three Cranes Challenge traverses Dartmoor and the wider Karkloof Nature Reserve.

those dainty antelope almost wiped out, and other naturally occurring species also in decline.

But the story promises a happy ending. The Ngunis may be standing in for the oribi for now but, as the veld improves, habitats will begin to recover, beckoning once more the cranes (all three species – blue, grey crowned, and wattle – occur in the area) and other grassland dwellers, including the special flora. The snaring problem, now also under control thanks to the efforts of Donna and her hand-picked team, means that the once hunted – the oribi, reedbuck and other gentle grazers – can also start to return (already, there are indications of an increase in numbers) and, when they do, they'll find abundant grazing and, along with the Ngunis, will play their rightful part in protecting the biodiversity of the Midlands mistbelt grasslands. One for all, and all for one. ■

Map reference D8 see inside back cover



WALK THE WILD SIDE

Karkloof Nature Reserve is private and generally not open to the public. However, a few opportunities exist for people to experience the reserve:

- From time to time, Midlands conservation groups hold **walks on parts of the reserve**. Details of such walks can be found at www.karkloofconservation.org.za or follow the Midlands Conservancies Forum blog at midlandsconservanciesforum.wordpress.com
- The annual **Three Cranes Challenge**, a tough three-day trail run that forms part of the Wildlands Conservation Trust's fundraising Wild Series (www.wildseries.co.za), took place at the end of February. This year our digital editor, Ian Macleod, took on the 100km-plus event as our online campaign. Read about his adventure on social media (using #CountryRunner) and on our blog: outoffice.countrylife.co.za



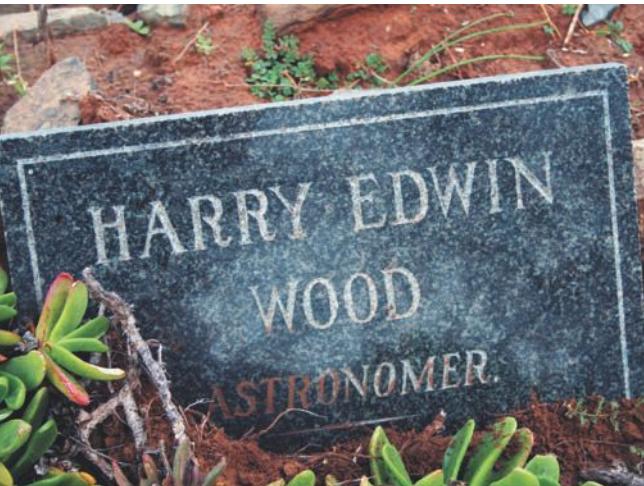
Thoughts in a Karoo Graveyard

There are many stories – some sad, some wondrous, others downright weird – to be found in the Cradock cemetery of the Karoo Heartland

WORDS AND PICTURES CHRIS MARAIS WWW.KAROOSPACE.CO.ZA



The main Cradock cemetery on a misty autumn morning – full of atmosphere and legend.



ABOVE: The mist lends 'story atmosphere' to a walk around the Cradock cemetery. LEFT: The stone of Harry Wood, once the official timekeeper for the Union of South Africa. RIGHT: The Michau family – one of the heritage clans of the Eastern Cape Midlands – is well represented here. BELOW LEFT: A member of the long-time local Chinese community is buried here. BELOW: Downtown Cradock on a misty autumn morning.





ABOVE: The grave of General Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger, the leading Anglo-Boer War figure of the district. BELOW: Tell the world – Harry Potter lies buried in the Karoo.



It's one of those misty autumn mornings here in the Karoo, the perfect time to be strolling about the Cradock cemetery. I can hear the resident Harrier Hawk, a juvenile by the sound of his hunting cry, as he sails through the grove of pine trees in search of breakfast.

Across the Great Fish River, the first train of the morning passes on its way up to Johannesburg. The massive overnight trucks in the main street begin to ready themselves for the day's driving, grumbling and growling past the fast-food joints. Here in the cemetery, thick mist swirls about the old gravestones and statues, some headless, and I can't help dwelling on a story I just heard from a long-time local.

There was a man who lost his wife and was inconsolable. On most nights after she was buried here, he would take a camp chair, a lantern and a book to her graveside. There, he would sit and read to her until bedtime, when he would pack up and leave.

Cradock used to have two movie houses in the old days. Every so often, the bereaved man would drive down to the cemetery dressed in his 'going-out clothes'. He would 'escort' his wife from her grave to his car, help her in and drive off to the movies. There, he would open the door for her, let her out and buy two entrance tickets. During the movie, he would offer her chocolates. And afterwards, he would take her back to the cemetery, open the passenger door and allow her spirit to alight.

I know that Cradock has many hard stories, some of them still in progress. But this one lifts my soul high.

Here's a simple black stone in the ground that only says: 'Harry Edwin Wood – Astronomer'. Mr Wood, history records, was the official astronomer and timekeeper for the Union of South Africa. He is also famous for his discovery of a comet recorded as '1660 Wood'.

In 1941 he retired and came to farm in the Mortimer area near Cradock. Legend has it that Mr Wood, the one-time national timekeeper, used to drive all the way in to Cradock (30km) to synchronise his wristwatch with the time on the steeple clock of the Dutch Reformed Mother Church. The

one that looks like St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London.

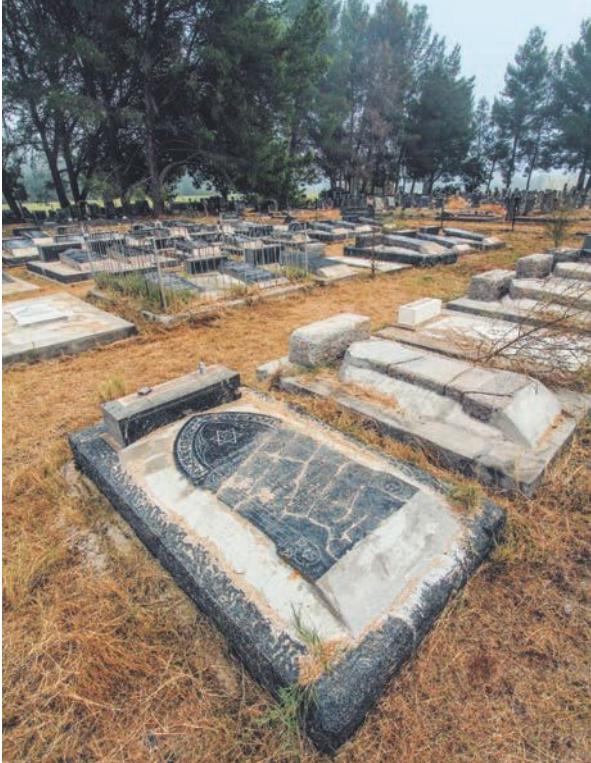
Nearby stands the imposing stone belonging to General Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger, who fought the British in this district during the South African (Anglo-Boer) War. Kritzinger was one of the Boer warriors who led their British pursuers a 'devil's dance' from the Free State through the Karoo Midlands, from Graaff-Reinet to Willowmore, Aberdeen and all the way across to Cradock.

This intrepid Boer guerrilla fighter also farmed around here, and later became a member of the Cape Provincial Council. Although a fine soldier, he was also known as a 'gentlemanly general', and after the war his attitude to the British softened considerably. In fact, the good general was a bit of an agricultural guru to young British immigrants arriving in Cradock to set up a farming life.

You used to be able to find the graves of the four Cape rebels who were executed in Cradock in front of the Victoria Hotel, and buried here. However, the devastating floods of 1974 washed them away. One of those executed was 16-year-old Johannes Petrus Coetze, captured in a fight in the Stormberg area. He thought they would treat him as a POW. They charged him as a rebel, convicted him of treason and made all the Afrikaners in Cradock come down to the centre of town and watch the hanging. I can just imagine the bitterness this evoked, and the subsequent fallout in the local community.

Nearly 70 British soldiers lie buried on these grounds. Some of them came back to Cradock after the Anglo-Boer War and made a life here. One of them could have been a Harry Potter. It's quite weird, really. Everyone seems to know something about most graves in this cemetery. No one, however, can tell me anything about this Harry Potter grave right in the centre of what a local chap calls 'The Valley of the Stiffs'.

All we know is that this Harry was a beloved husband who died on 27 July 1910 at the age of 46. Some say he was once stationed here with the Brit forces and liked it so much he spent the rest of his years in the area. Either way, I really think JK Rowling needs to find out about this



TOP LEFT: Many of the infant gravestones tell the story of the child's passing. TOP: The gravesites framed by morning mist and a grove of pine trees. ABOVE: The child mortality rate in the old-time Karoo was exceptionally high. LEFT: Cradock cemetery – a place of watchful angels. RIGHT: Stephen Mullineux has made something of a hobby out of researching the history of Cradock.





ABOVE: Dr Reginald Koettlitz, medical officer for one of Scott's Antarctic expeditions, lies buried here with his wife, Marie Louise. BELOW: The last remains of Peter Sidey, laid to rest here by the Cradock Teetotal Society.

No one, however, can tell me anything about this Harry Potter grave right in the centre of what a local chap calls 'The Valley of the Stiffs'

particular gravesite, for obvious reasons.

The tall heaven-pointing plinth with the Freemason's mark at its base belongs to the Koettlitz couple. Dr Reginald Koettlitz was famous for being, according to his description, 'An explorer and traveller, surgeon and geologist to Expeditions North Polar and Abyssinia and with Scott to the Antarctic'.

Best known for his trip with Captain Scott on his first mission to the Antarctic, Dr Koettlitz, so the story goes, somehow neglected to add enough vitamin C to the polar pioneers' diet. This was attributed by some critics as having led to the Scott party being in a weakened state before they perished on the second expedition.

Dr Koettlitz was exonerated some years later – after all, Scott himself should have realised that, after the first trip, there would be a good chance of getting scurvy if they weren't fed enough vitamin C. Look again at the Koettlitz stone, and you will notice that he died on 10 January 1916, and that his wife, Marie Louise, died a scant two hours after him. They are both interred at this site.

Along the path, there's another large memorial to the brothers Botha, who died on 25 October 1918, of Die Spaanse Griep – the Spanish Flu. The word flu does not really do descriptive justice to this dreaded infection that killed 20 million people around the world – 500 000 of them here in South Africa.

The Johannesburg newspaper *The Star* records:

'Now there were more than 1 000 dead in Kimberley. And they'd run out of coffins in some towns.'

'Doctors and nurses were dying. People checking on relatives living on the platteland found farmhouses as silent as the grave.'

'A man called William Hill working

at East Rand Proprietary Mine collapsed across the machinery in the winding house at 03h00 one day while the cage was coming up. It crashed into the headgear, killing 19.'

The Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918 (and the fateful Black October in particular) was judged at the time to be the 'single most devastating episode in the demographic history of South Africa.'

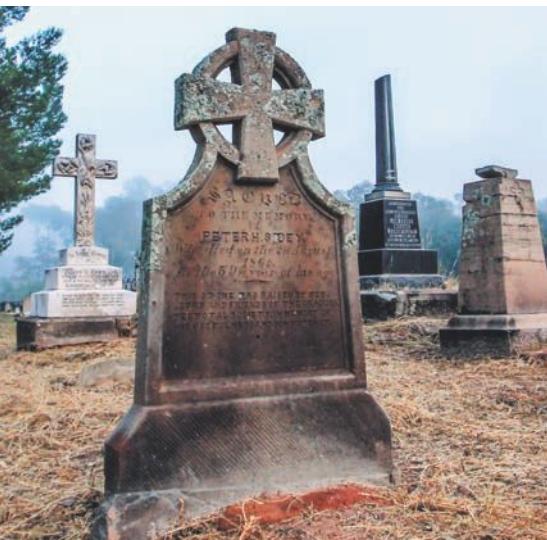
Which brings us to the children's section of the cemetery, where wistful cherubs with downcast eyes guard the graves of babes, the pained messages of their parents on the stones almost too poignant to bear. And as the mist clears, I see vandals have beheaded many of the little statues. Frontier life took its toll on the offspring of the pioneers and settlers along the Great Fish River. The Spanish Flu was but one of the many causes of infant death.

Stephen Mullineux, a neighbour who works at Water Affairs, knows quite a lot about Cradock's history. He meets us down at the cemetery one day, where he indicates the graves of the four suicides buried in the cemetery. They face west. All the other graves face the rising sun.

Stephen shows us the grave of one Louis Levenstein, who has an etching of a rugby ball on his stone. The inscribed dedication tells one that Louis died in Adelaide during a rugby match. Nearby is another sports fan's grave, that of Luzarian Vernon Holland. The stone is green and the base depicts an entire rugby field.

On the way out, I notice the stone of one Peter Sidey, buried in 1864 with the help of the Cradock Teetotal Society. Hmm. I know we've got a Bridge Club, a 4x4 Club and an *Afvalgilde* (The Guild of Honourable Tripe-Eaters), but I never knew we had a Teetotal Society. I don't think we have one any more... ■

Map reference F5 see inside back cover





A Match Made *in Heaven*

It's hard to find a bad blind date in the Overberg. Join FIONA MCINTOSH as she uses a great online tool to tailor-make the perfect gastronomic adventure

PICTURES SHAEN ADEY AND SUPPLIED

It's a white," I gambled, dumbfounded that I couldn't even discern the colour of the wine in the black glass proffered for the blind tasting. A nod. "The Viognier?" I punched the air in most unladylike triumph as Khail van Niekerk, Creation brand ambassador and our highly entertaining host, confirmed that my nose and taste buds had not let me down.

In truth I had a head start. Creation only produces four whites and one of them was sold out. Their Chardonnay is one of my favourite wines, which even in a blind tasting I would back myself to identify so I had

a 50 per cent chance of hitting the jackpot.

The tasting was one of the highlights of our visit to this gorgeous wine farm and restaurant in the Hemel en Aarde Valley in the Walker Bay Wine Region, a fitting introduction to our tailor-made food route through the southern Overberg.

It started as a game. I came across the Food Routes website while idly surfing one day and was intrigued by the concept of its Culinary Sensibility Identities (CSI), a food forensic tool that, so the website claims, matches the expectations of the Food Routes traveller with the destination.

"Think of a blind date," explains Food Routes co-founder Riaan Kruger. "Neither

party knows what to expect so it's a potential recipe for a disaster. By identifying an individual's culinary profile we can maximise the chance of a good experience all round." Having chosen the Hermanus area for my gastronomic adventure, I identified the CSI profiles that best described my approach to dining out – then sought out establishments to match.

As with all online dating, the research proved intriguing. Nay, compulsive. I spent hours studying photos of tasting rooms and restaurants, drooling over menus and trying to work out how much we could cram into 48 hours. The dozen or so Food Routes experiences on offer ranged from good-value,



FAR LEFT: Carolyn Martin, co-owner of Creation Wines, enjoys a food and wine pairing. LEFT: Jean-Claude Martin, co-owner of Creation Wines, in the cellar. ABOVE: The staff at ELL restaurant on Spookfontein wine estate. RIGHT: Hemelrand Olive Oil is produced on the neighbouring farm to Spookfontein. BELOW: The charismatic Nora Hudson of ELL restaurant.

family friendly adventures such as wine blending and cheese- and olive oil tastings to fine-dining choices supreme. These included Springfontein Eats and Wine Estate, famous for its home-grown and foraged herbs and veggies, and the elegant, gourmet Pavilion at The Marine.

Eventually I plumped for what seemed to be the best combination of experiences to fit my tastes and tight schedule. A click of the mouse and, hey presto, the website flashed up all the information required to make my foodie adventure a reality: a route map, directions and approximate journey times between the various establishments, plus opening hours and other relevant details on my selections and, of course, an online booking platform. It's hardly revolutionary but is an entertaining way to experience a new region, or discover some hidden gems in an area you think you know well.

Creation fell into the latter category, a treasure on the Heaven on Earth ridge that produces some of the Cape's finest wines. Its primary CSI, 'atmosphere', was also mine, and the sublime location, clean, chic decor and artfully presented tasting platters were a match made in heaven. We lingered way longer than we'd intended, working our way through the various offerings to the grand finale, the decadent Paradoxical Wine and



Chocolate pairing – if you're in the area, do *not* pass this over.

From Creation we bumbled down the valley to Spookfontein wine estate's ELL – Eat Love Life – restaurant, selected as fulfilling the *locavore* aspect of my CSI profile. 'Locavores are interested both in



enjoying food that's produced locally, and in learning about, and meeting, the producers as well', advises the Food Routes website so we weren't altogether surprised when the ebullient owner, Nora Hudson, sat down with us and explained how she lives and works by her mantra 'you are what you eat'.

"I'm actually vegetarian," she explained. "We serve meat, but only from local, ethical butchers. It's extremely important to us to ensure that animals are well-treated and slaughtered humanely. And we also make sure that nothing is wasted."

Nora introduced us to Craig Sheard, the estate's winemaker, and we started by sampling a couple of their organic wines. "The pesky baboons keep stripping the upper blocks," he told us as he pointed out the extent of the vineyards under his care. We laughed, but his stance is completely in keeping with the holistic vision of organic, ethically sustainable products on the farm. The maverick winemaker believes in letting nature take its course, practising organic viticulture and natural viniculture. Not only



The late Liz McGrath, owner of The Marine. 'Mrs M' as she was known to her adoring staff.
ABOVE RIGHT: Perched on the clifftop, The Marine is one of the landmarks of Hermanus
BELOW: Fish and chips to die for at SeaFood at The Marine.



does he refuse to use chemical pesticides, he won't even scare off the crafty thieves.

Lunch was a true labour of love – curried mussels followed by the very best home-made chicken pie. In between jumping up to photograph the chefs and the delectable dishes coming out of the kitchen, Shaen tucked into a designer pizza drizzled with olive oil from Hemelrand, a neighbouring farm.

It was mid-afternoon when we finally left the Hemel en Aarde Valley for The Marine, the elegant Relais & Châteaux hotel in Hermanus that was to be our home for the night. The grand old dame is right on the town's famous Cliff Path so we worked off the excesses of the day with a brisk walk along the winding promenade, stopping to watch the whales blow and descending to a couple of sheltered coves for a bracing dip.

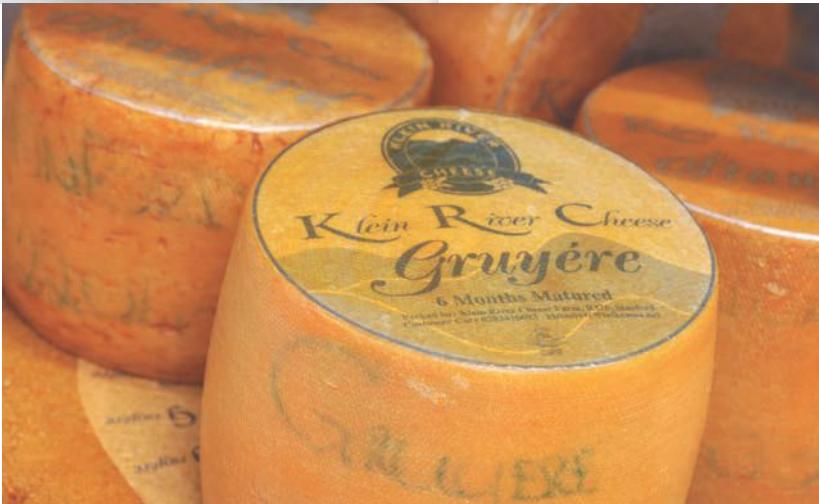
SeaFood at The Marine's primary CSI makes it attractive to 'foodies', the final

piece of my CSI jigsaw. According to Food Routes, foodies are 'not less than a gourmet, just different. Their passion for food plays out in varied, less structured and delineated parameters...' Feeling that 'gourmet' was a bit too sophisticated for my eclectic taste (and somewhat apprehensive of larney, expensive restaurants) it seemed a good compromise. The stylish, fresh interiors of the restaurant created a relaxed atmosphere and the combination of classic and creative dishes constructed from fresh sustainable seafood, and prepared before our eyes in the open kitchen, ticked all of my boxes.

The restaurant had just re-opened for the season so the hands-on owner Liz McGrath was dining quietly in the corner. She looked familiar – with hindsight I realised I'd probably seen her face in The Marine's marketing literature – so we smiled as we passed her table. Minutes later two glasses



BELOW: The deli at Klein River Cheese Factory is a great lunch spot. And we took home one of these tasty mature Gruyères. RIGHT: Salads picked straight from the garden at Stanford's Lagoon Lodge.





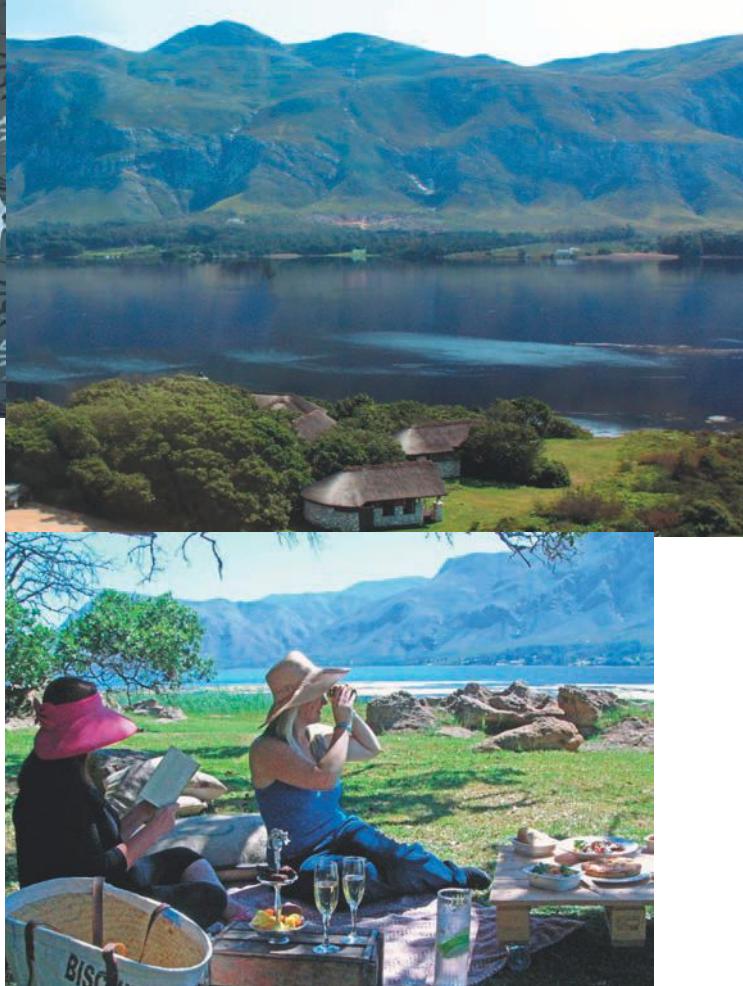
ABOVE LEFT: The Marine team, Karnan Munsamy, Peter Tempelhof, Chad Blows and Lesley Cornelise. ABOVE RIGHT: The sublime setting of Mosaic Private Sanctuary on the edge of the Hermanus Lagoon. LEFT: Spookfontein winemaker Craig Sheard. RIGHT: Staff at Lagoon Lodge will pack you a picnic to enjoy in the grounds.

of bubbles arrived at our table and she caught my eye again as she raised her own glass. Our waitress smiled; apparently the gesture was typical of this amazing 93-year-old workaholic. Sadly Liz passed away in January this year.

The following day we went hiking and biking in the area, sustaining ourselves with a tasting at Klein River Cheese farm before heading through Stanford to Lagoon Lodge in the Mosaic Private Sanctuary. This swathe of land south of the R43 coastal road is not a part of the world I know but the safari-style lodge is divine, with uninterrupted views from stone and thatch suites of the Hermanus Lagoon against a mountainous backdrop.



LEFT: Food Routes website co-founder Riaan Kruger.



We sat out with our binoculars watching the birds, the sunset and the twinkling lights of Hermanus before dinner, an absolute feast of organic vegetables harvested from the garden and other locally sourced products (you guessed it, another *locavore* restaurant) served under the milkwood trees.

The foodie in me was delighted; the innovative dishes were beautifully presented, the wine list was impressive and, best of all, the staff was charming, informed and incredibly attentive. As we retired to our private deck for a nightcap under the stars I rued the fact that our own Overberg Food Route was coming to an end.

As we drove back to Cape Town the following morning we reflected on the varied experiences of the previous two days. Each

had been memorable but it was the fervent passion of those involved that left the deepest impression. Everyone we had met lived the life. Whether they were owners, winemakers, cheese makers, chefs, waiters or gardeners they embodied the underlying philosophy of the establishment in which they honed their craft.

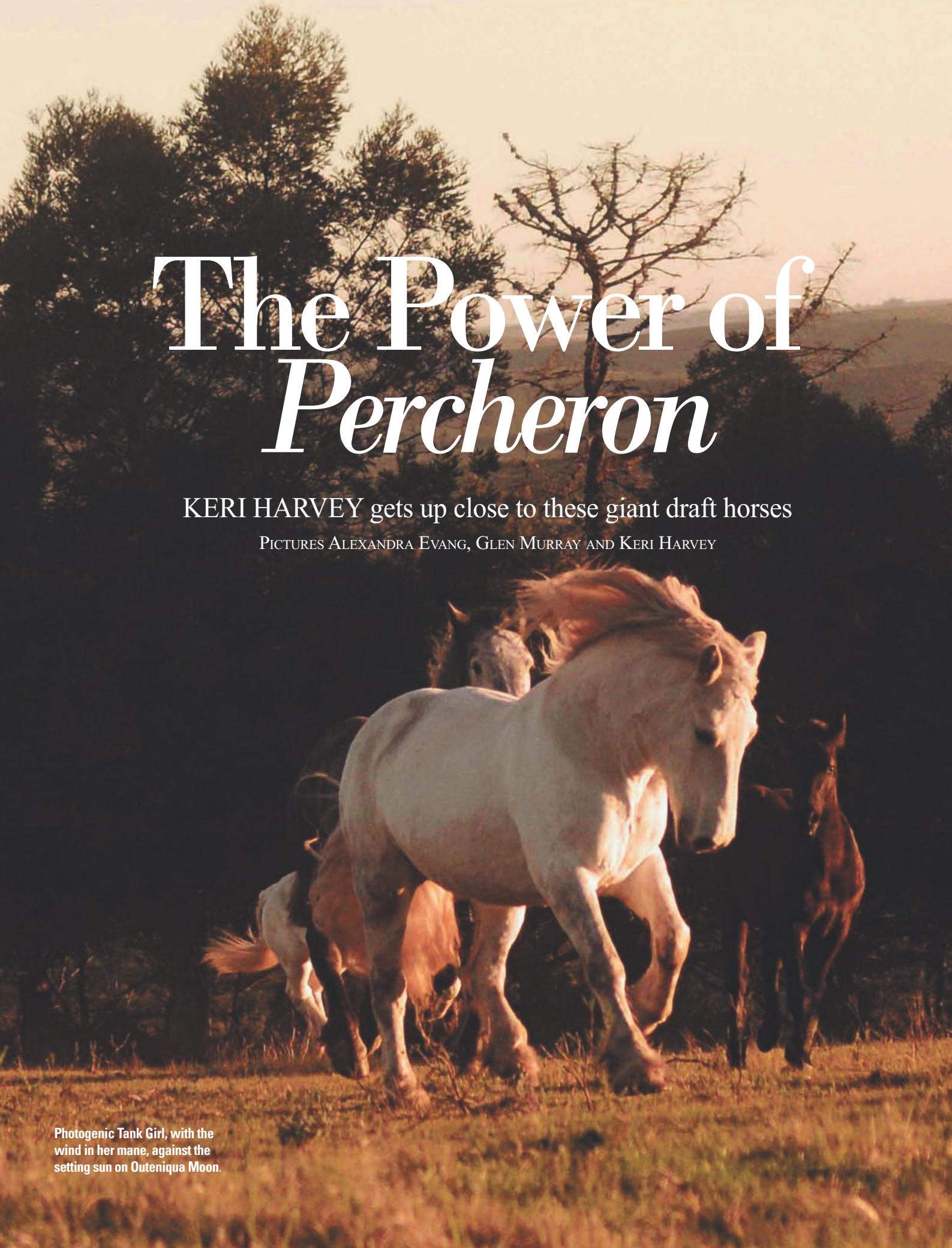
My conclusion? Well, the matchmaking certainly added a bit of entertainment value, while the route planner made us more realistic about what we could achieve in the time available. We were certainly not disappointed by any of our choices but, to be honest, it's hard to find a bad blind date in the foodie haven of the Overberg. ■

Map reference G2 see inside back cover

Food Routes offers this handy interactive route planner suggesting recommended routes between establishments, and the approximate travel times. It makes planning an adventure a piece of cake.

082 542 7566, www.foodroutes.co.za

The Power of *Percheron*



KERI HARVEY gets up close to these giant draft horses

PICTURES ALEXANDRA EVANG, GLEN MURRAY AND KERI HARVEY

Photogenic Tank Girl, with the
wind in her mane, against the
setting sun on Outeniqua Moon.



LEFT: Christine and Peter Watt at Outeniqua Moon with their Percheron Betty. ABOVE: Greystoke is one of the magnificent stallions on the farm just outside Klein Brak on the Garden Route.

Christine Watt has had a lifelong love affair with horses. Particularly Percherons. "Hello Tank Girl," she whispers to the towering white mare she is stroking, gazing intently into the horse's eyes as she talks: "They are so powerful and have such spirit."

We're at the Percheron stud farm Outeniqua Moon, about 15km from Klein Brak on the Garden Route. Christine and her husband Peter bought the farm in 2001, when all they wanted was a change of pace. The 100 hectares with indigenous forest and wildlife was just perfect. "There was nothing here but a broken barn and a two-bedroom pondok," says Peter.

A rider all her life, Christine wanted a few horses on the farm and Peter suggested Percherons. "I was awestruck the minute I first saw them," she says. "They are just so huge and gentle. And so intelligent. Did you know horses can understand up to 450 commands, whereas a dog can understand 50, and an ox just eight? Percherons are also incredibly strong, and can pull five tons on wheels or a ton of dead weight. They're true work horses."

As she talks, a wooden four-wheel cart moves past slowly in the distance. It's being pulled by Bobby, the first Percheron to arrive on the farm. Seated on built-in bench seats in the cart are delighted guests enjoying a gentle ride through the foothills of the Outeniqua Mountains. It's late afternoon and the light is soft on the mountainside as they wind their way along. It's quite an experience to travel the old-world way for an hour or so. Visitors staying in the guest cottages on the farm can enjoy a carriage ride and sign up for Percheron horse-riding and carriage-driving lessons. Christine tutors these personally to give guests a taste of what these heavy draft horses are all about.

Outeniqua Moon, with 16 Percherons now, is a renowned stud farm, said to have some of the best bloodlines and biggest horses in South Africa. "We have also bred the biggest colt in the country," Christine says. "Shadowfax is still growing at only three years old but already measures more than 18 hands, and weighs about a ton."

As we stroll around the lush paddocks, Christine points out the stallions Greystoke and Ulysses, and the mares Betty, Bella,

Lucy, Lisa, Black Pearl and Artemis, plus some fillies in darker shades. "The Percherons bred here are sold to selected buyers for riding, pulling carriages, for tourism ventures, and for use on small farms. An Eastern Cape farmer I know saves himself more than R15 000 a month by using Percherons instead of diesel on his farm."

Christine is animated when she changes the subject to green farming. A return to non-mechanised farm equipment is very close to her heart. "The heavy draft horses once used on farms had to take a back seat to machinery once the tractor was invented at the beginning of the 20th century," she explains. "Now farmers are beginning to see the potential of using draft horses again."

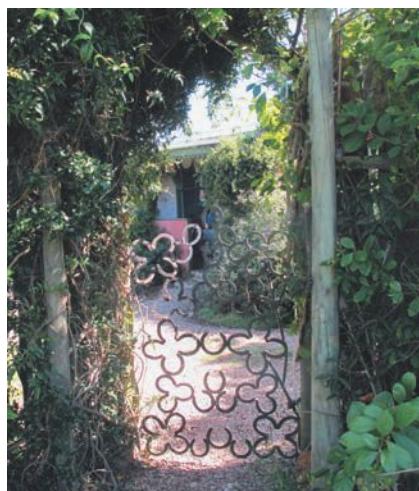
"We are going to be working our Percherons here too," she explains. "To plough and help plant organic vegetables for us, and the soup kitchen and school feeding scheme we supply, and to plant the alfalfa for the horses themselves. We'll be using modern farming equipment specially developed by the Amish for use with heavy draft horses. The special collars for this have already been ordered from abroad."



ABOVE: The tack rack of bridles and leather apparel for larger-than-life Percherons. ABOVE RIGHT: Christine says horses can read human emotions. Here Tatiana's gentleness to little Leon Oerson, watched over by dad Kevin, is quite clear. BELOW RIGHT: Even the garden gate at Outeniqua Moon is crafted from horse shoes. BELOW: Outeniqua Moon started out as a 'pondok' but Peter and Christine have transformed it into a magnificent farmstead with chic, country-style accommodation.



ABOVE: Closing his eyes for a kiss – Artemis and Carmin Oerson commune. BELOW: Bob is so relaxed, children can enjoy a ride without a care. He is also one of the Percherons that pulls the horse cart around the farm.



Of course there is plenty of horse manure to green the fields, and an earthworm farm will further nourish this green-farming system.

Over supper of home-made chicken pie and a garden salad grown just metres away, we learn how adult Percherons mostly end up as greys. They are born pitch black and fade in colour as they mature. "It's the unusual black Percherons that are highly sought after," Christine tells us. "We have two here at Outeniqua Moon – both were born silver and turned black as adults."

There's quite a history behind these gentle giants. They come from the Huisne River valley in the French province of Le Perche, near Normandy, but it's believed they were originally used for war – in as early as 732AD. "Actually the use of Percherons as war horses was first documented by the Romans, and the horses were used in battle and wars across Europe," Christine explains.

Before World War I, thousands of these horses were shipped from France to the USA. Their reliability, good nature, strength and intelligence then led to their popularity as work horses on farms and for pulling carriages and other heavy goods.

Two stallions – Hammer and Jones – were the first Percherons documented to arrive in South Africa from France, but today the number of Percherons here remains at only about 300, on agricultural and stud farms across the countryside. They were also used in the wine and wheat-farming areas to cultivate land, and up until 2010 SANParks and the Department of Forestry used Percherons to haul the logs of felled trees out of tricky forest reaches onto slip paths, to be loaded and transported away.

Of all the heavy draft horses – Percherons, Clydesdales, Shires and Belgians – Percherons are generally regarded as being the most docile, and it's clear that it is precisely the



ABOVE: Cart rides are ever popular at Outeniqua Moon. It's a journey from a different era. ABOVE RIGHT: Aptly named Tank Girl is a massive Percheron mare. RIGHT: Shadowfax in conversation over the fence – he is South Africa's biggest colt and still growing.

gentle temperament of these powerhouses that Christine is so drawn to. So it's surprising then, that it was also a Percheron that put an end to her riding days. "Oh but there's no blame on the horse," she says emphatically. "It was in 2002, and I had rescued an abused Percheron and brought it to the farm. Any abused animal can turn vicious, as did this one, and he shattered my back and arm."

All this did was entrench in Christine her fight against animal abuse, particularly Percherons. "What has been done to Percherons around the world is horrific. Huge numbers were slaughtered in the 20th century when tractors rolled off production lines and the horses were no longer needed on farms – and in France they are still being used for meat today."

Outeniqua Moon's Percherons hold another surprise for visitors to the guest and stud farm. The huge horses love lying down on the ground and resting their heads in

your lap. "It's not a Percheron thing," says Christine with a laugh. "It's an Outeniqua Moon thing, because when they were small we used to sing to them and they would put their heads in our lap. They allowed us to interact with them on such an intimate basis and it instilled total trust and confidence in the horses." It's also likely why these Percherons are particularly docile.

Darkness is cloaking Outeniqua Moon as Christine leads us to a nearby stable to show us a mare and her brand-new foal. Alongside is a bed where Peter and Christine are now

sleeping, as they monitor both horses day and night until the foal is six weeks old. "This is why we don't lose foals and why our horses have calm temperaments and are so sought after," she says. "We've always wanted to do something with our lives that makes sense. And what we do here at Outeniqua Moon just does." ■

Map reference G4 see inside back cover

**Outeniqua Moon 044 631 0093
082 564 9782, watt@hilbert.co.za
www.outeniquamoon.co.za**

Up Close with Percherons

- Take a cart ride at the Castle in Cape Town. 021 704 6907/8, www.ctcco.co.za
- Enjoy a carriage or horse ride 7km from Plettenberg Bay at T'niqua Stable Inn. 044 533 4830, www.tniqua.co.za
- See Percherons in Rawsonville at Almarada Stud (023 344 3746), Elsenburg College, Stellenbosch (021 808 5111) and at Klipdrif Stud in Robertson (023 626 2385).



Is it Elgin or Eden?

Heirloom apple trees planted in a heritage orchard
of the Overberg are already bearing fruit

WORDS MYRNA ROBINS PICTURES MYRNA ROBINS AND SUPPLIED





It's April, it's autumn and it's apple time. The sound of happy consumers biting into new-season apples echoes across the country, as this year's crop piles up in supermarkets, farm stalls and at roadside vendors. As you read this, harvesting teams continue to pluck varieties from thousands of trees in apple orchards from Elgin to Ceres, Langkloof to Piketberg and beyond.

But let's pause awhile in the lovely highland valley that is Elgin. A peep into the yard behind the restored railway station buildings reveals towers of lugs, and trucks lining up to receive the bounty and haul it off to destinations near and far. A good place to watch this is on Platform 1, while enjoying coffee and apple crumble at the little restaurant that has made the historic Elgin station a great culinary venue. Don't leave without stepping into the former booking office, a nostalgic treasury, where you can taste the Winters Drift wines from Glen Elgin, the farm through which the railway line runs.

Carry on past the station and you reach Oak Valley Estate, a huge, historic farm where apples and pears share acreage with mountain vineyards, flower nurseries, pastures and mountain-biking trails. This is where you'll find sweet evidence of a unique apple project that is bearing fruit in every sense of the word.

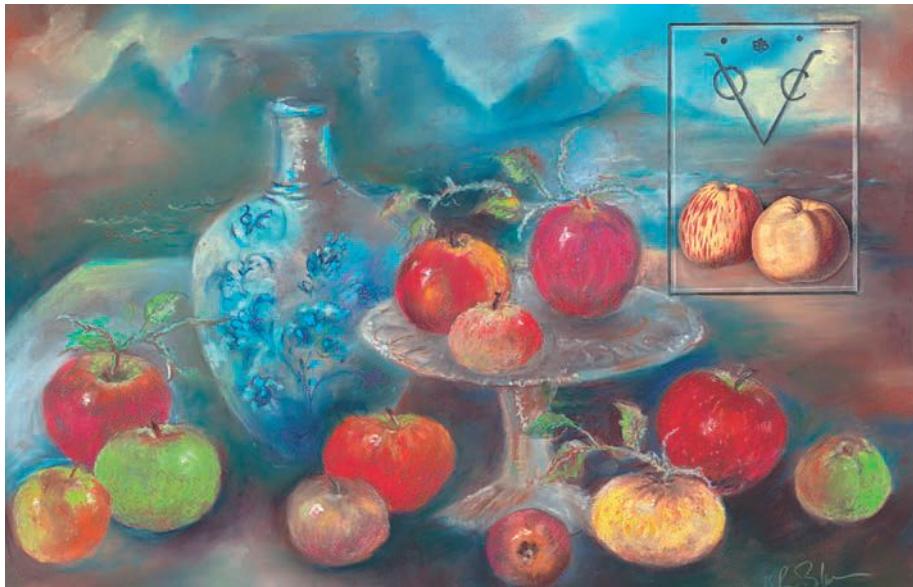
Some years back the managing director of Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing, Charles Hughes, became concerned at the lack of information about old apple varieties and the paucity of surviving trees. While it's still easy to find old faithfuls like Golden Delicious and Granny Smith, how many readers can recall (any, or all of) the following varieties: Cleopatra, Cox's Orange Pippin, Winter Pearmain and Ohenimuri?

Old-timers who grew up in the Langkloof area may recall the Kroontjie, an apple that boys at boarding school in Joubertina used to enjoy. And it is a Kroontjie apple tree in a garden at Misgund Orchards outside Misgund, a small town near Joubertina in the Langkloof of the Eastern Cape, that may well

OPPOSITE PAGE: The historic and lovely Oak Valley Estate. TOP: Golden goodness ready for plucking. LEFT: The old Elgin station now plays a new and hospitable role.



LEFT: Setting up for harvest at Oak Valley in Elgin. ABOVE: Authors and heritage apple investigators Buks Nel and Henk Griessel in period costume for the historic Heritage Orchard event in Elgin. BELOW: Minor varieties that used to be grown at the Cape, in a painting by Karel van Biljon.



be the oldest surviving apple tree in South Africa, according to the authors of an enchanting little apple book.

The search for venerable apple trees bearing half-forgotten varieties started more than five years ago when Tru-Cape's new varieties specialist Buks Nel and quality assurance manager Henk Griessel turned detective, embarking on a two-year investigation that saw them combing the country in search of old trees, along with digging into the Cape archives, libraries and local museums. The results have been captured in their little hardback called *Apples in the Early Days of the Cape*, a treasury of information.

The stories behind heritage varieties planted in Cape orchards, as the 19th century gave way to the 20th, present a fascinating mix of travel, history and detective work. Take the tale of how the Ohenimuri apple got its name – one that involves a Maori tribe, a dragon who lived in a river, and a maiden whom the dragon saved before it disappeared. The river in New Zealand was named Ohinemuri, meaning ‘the maid who was left behind’. As the fruit tree became a popular choice in this country the name morphed into Ohenimuri, later often abbreviated to The Hennie by local harversters. The apple has all but disappeared today.

One heirloom apple that the authors

think is a genuine Cape or colonial original is the Wemmershoek, which was listed in an 1896 manual and is said to have first appeared on the farm of that name in the Franschhoek district. The farm disappeared under water when the Wemmershoek Dam was constructed in 1957, drowning its pomological secrets with it.

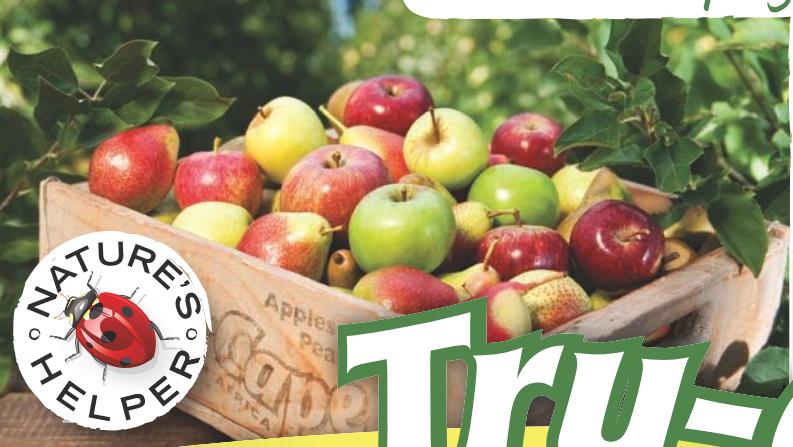
As Buks and Henk chalked up considerable success in unearthing various venerable apple trees across South Africa, plans to plant a heritage orchard were finalised. On a chilly, drizzly November day in 2012, guests gathered on a sloping field between vineyards and meadows, on Oak Valley Estate in Elgin. The event was hosted by farmer Anthony Rawbone-Viljoen and Charles Hughes of Tru-Cape, and guests and workers took turns to plant a spindly heritage sapling in each of the 14 name-tagged holes. In good Elgin fashion, it was an understated yet memorable affair, with descendants of prominent early apple farmers and nurserymen from both the valley and further afield among the guests.

For another highlight in this fruity investigative trail, we need to wind back the clock more than 350 years. Historians have good reason to salute Jan van Riebeeck's diligence in keeping detailed records of events at the Cape from his arrival in April 1652. He planted a number of apple trees over the next few years, and, on 17 April, just 10 years later, his 1662 diary records the following good news: 'Today the first two ripe Dutch

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ABOVE: The apple harvest in full swing. RIGHT: Hansie Boshoff of Oak Valley shows off the first harvest of heritage Wemmershoek apples.

apples were picked in the Company's nursery garden... This type of apple is known as a *wijnappel*.

Thanks to one Hermann Johann Knoop, who published his *Pomologia* in 1758 in which he identifies more than 100 apple varieties (and more than 90 pear varieties) we know that the *wijnappel* can be red or white, the former large, smooth-skinned, juicy and tasty, while the white is similar but not as flavourful. Thanks to their tough skin, *wijnappels* lasted well, so could be sent on long sea voyages, and they were also good for apple wine.

As Buks and Henk could find no trace of a *wijnappel* tree during their South African travels, the quest went abroad, undertaken by Bas van Andel in the Netherlands, who criss-crossed Holland in search of the heirloom apple. Finally – success. In the north of that little country, on a farm between the Rhine and Maas rivers, he came across a few white *wijnappel* trees in an old orchard.

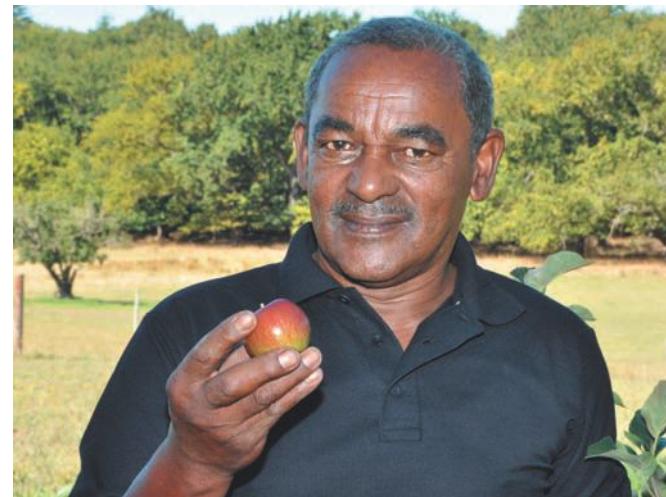
Buks Nel headed north to oversee the many processes involved in bringing this treasure back to the Cape. The historic apple is being propagated at the Naktuinbouw, a Dutch horticultural inspection service. Only after being pronounced free of virus for at least two seasons will it be allowed to head south for further time in a South African plant-quarantine centre. It is hoped that by 2020 a *wijnappel* tree will have been added to the Heritage Orchard in Elgin.

It's been just two-and-a-half years since the first apple sapling was planted in the Heritage Orchard and already, of the 20 varieties growing there, 15 have produced their first fruit. Rhode Island Greening, the original variety planted on Oak Valley Estate in 1899 is doing well, as is the Wemmershoek, and, not to be outdone, Ohenimuri has also produced a small maiden crop. Seems like there's much to be said for preserving past pleasures for future palates. ■

Map reference G2 see inside back cover

Apples Make their Mark

- Celebrate the maiden harvest of Oak Valley's Heritage Orchard at a three-course lunch in the Pool Room restaurant on the estate, on April 17 – 353 years after Van Riebeeck's first apple was picked in The Company's Garden, Cape Town. Buks Nel and Henk Griessel, authors of *Apples in the Early Days of the Cape* will give a talk just before lunch and a visit to the Heritage Orchard will follow that afternoon. 021 859 2510, www.oakvalley.co.za
- *Apples in the Early Days at the Cape* by Buks Nel and Henk Griessel is published by Tru-Cape and available from www.Tru-Cape.co.za for R250 including postage. 021 850 1800, info@Tru-Cape.co.za



Did You Know?

- The most popular apples with South African consumers today are Top Red and other Gala strains, as well as Cripps Pink, which is labelled Pink Lady when it achieves its full colour, and old faithful Golden Delicious.
- In the Elgin region, apple orchards occupy 2 585ha, totalling about 3.3 million trees. These represent about 12% of the apple industry in South Africa.
- Last year well over 7 million cartons of apples were exported from the Elgin region alone, with 32% going to African countries, 26% to the Far East and Asia, and 23% to the UK. The European Union and Russia took 8% each, as did the Middle East, while 3% went to the Indian Ocean Islands. These add up to about 27% of the total number of cartons of apples exported from this country.

Under Canvas

Go rustic or escape to nostalgic opulence

1 Limpopo
Hamiltons Tented Camp Kruger National Park
If you long for the bygone era of safaris and nights under canvas, the luxurious Hamiltons Tented Camp is it. And much more. Think Baroness Karen von Blixen and *Out of Africa* and you'll be spot on. Hamiltons is tiny and secluded, with just six air-conditioned, tented suites on the banks of the Nwatswitsonto River, in a private concession within the park. Stepping into Hamiltons – named after Colonel James Stevenson-Hamilton, who was instrumental in the establishment of the Kruger and was its first warden – is like stepping across a timeline to when Africa was wilder and life was slower. Think slipper baths, outdoor showers with views over the surrounding bushveld, private decks where you can watch game, and a personal butler, always on call. Decor is nostalgic with touches like gramophones, brass binoculars, pith helmets and vintage leather suitcases. Raised walkways connect the suites to the lodge, since the camp is unfenced and open to the

Kruger. This means wildlife moves freely through the camp just as it did before Hamiltons was there. Respect between wildlife and man is mutual here. – *Keri Harvey*

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2 Botswana
Poletswe Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
One of two Ta Shebube camps on the Botswana side of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Poletswe only opened in 2014, so is still fairly unknown. As it's far from the main rest camps, you avoid the crowds on game drives along the Nossob River. The camp is on top of a small hill with views over the Poletswe Pan and surrounding rugged yet beautiful landscape. The borehole (on the edge of the pan right in front of the camp) draws herds of game so you can indulge in some leisurely game viewing on your veranda from the comfort of an armchair, binos and a G&T in hand. The main communal area has a dining area, reading area, bar and a viewing deck complete with a powerful telescope to study the stars or zoom in on game or birds. There are only six tents offering good privacy and they each have a wonderful outdoor shower. – *Shaen Adey*

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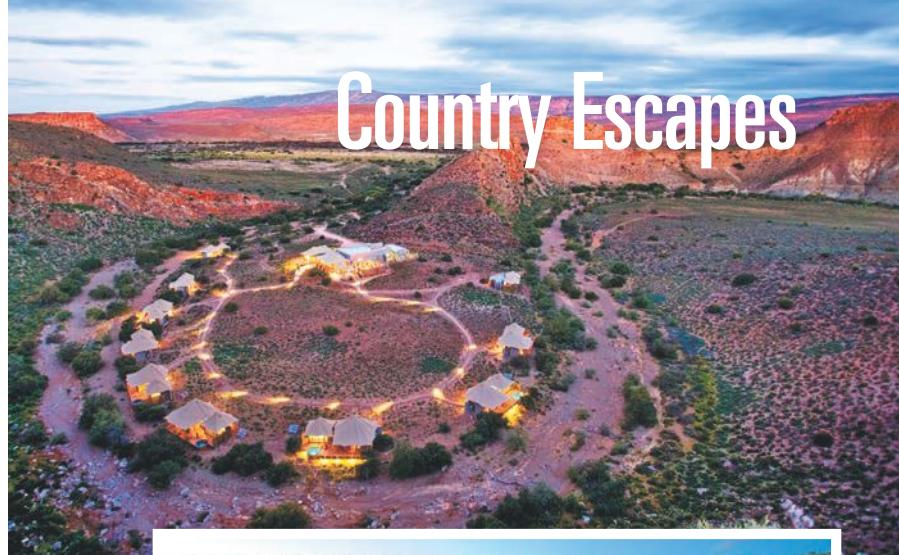
Country Escapes

3 Western Cape

Dwyka Tented Lodge Little Karoo

On arrival at the secluded Dwyka Tented Lodge, surrounded by volcanic mountains, rock formations and endless vistas, I almost expected a Red Indian tribe to suddenly line the rim of the surrounding horseshoe canyon. It is one of three lodges within the Sanbona Wildlife Reserve in the heart of the Little Karoo. Sanbona covers 54 000 hectares and is one of the largest privately owned Big Five reserves in South Africa. Dwyka has nine luxury tents, each with a private plunge pool and deck. Activities include game drives, stargazing and bird watching (the reserve has more than 200 species), while at the lodge there's a wine cellar, a gift boutique and two relaxation therapy rooms if you feel like a bit of pampering. After a game drive highlighted by white lion sightings, I indulged in the hot-water outdoor shower and then zipped my canvas tent and crossed over boardwalks to the boma, where the fire roared in the Karoo night. The food and chilled wine completed a day that cowboys can only dream of. – *Elke Losskarn*

041 509 3000, reservations@sanbona.com, www.sanbona.com



4 Western Cape

Napier Ox Wagons Overberg

Mention Napier and country crafts and art galleries come to mind. But high on its hillside, on a farm at the foot of the Soetmuisberg, there's a collection of restored ox wagons that offer unusual accommodation. From the smallest called Kakebeenwa to Blue Saloon and two long ox wagons that were used in the past for ferrying freight, each is fitted with beds, carpets and lamps. Watch shooting stars from your comfy mattress and wake to the call of Blue Cranes in canola fields. The camp is rustic with a shower and toilet, a fully kitted-out kitchen with a fridge, and a braai area. The furniture is eclectic and collectables include farm implements and British and Canadian wagons. The camp is an ideal base from which to explore the village, the nearby Napier Mountain Conservancy or to take a short trip across the Agulhas Plains to the tip of Africa. – *Karen Watkins*

072 931 8665

5 KwaZulu-Natal

Kosi Forest Lodge iSimangaliso Wetland Park

Right on the edge of the Kosi Lake system, this private lodge is a prime ecotourist destination. The eight canvas and thatch rooms and the two family suites are perched on wooden decks so you really feel at one with the surrounding bush. They're simple yet comfortable, with mosquito nets for windows, wooden furniture and open-air, en-suite bathrooms surrounded by reeds and lit by paraffin lamps – unbelievably romantic. If you can drag yourself away from your tranquil deck or the pool, there's a host of activities including boat and canoe trips, raffia forest walks and beach excursions, which allow you to really appreciate the camp's isolated location in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, a World Heritage Site. There's a generator for electricity (and limited, intermittent Wi-Fi) until 22h00, after which the place is candlelit. So this is somewhere to enjoy good country food and starry skies; a special place to recharge your batteries. – *Fiona McIntosh*

035 474 1473, res@isibindi.co.za, www.isibindi.co.za

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online
deal



Country Escapes

6

KwaZulu-Natal Mabibi Beach Camp Maputaland

High in the dunes of the coastal forest at Mabibi Beach Camp, Hulley Point, three tented, self-catering chalets are a wonderfully affordable bush and beach option for families or those who just want to get away from it all. The canvas units sleep four but since the second bedroom is only accessible from the main bedroom it's best for your kids or close friends. All are fully equipped with a kitchenette and braai area, and outdoor table and chairs so you can sit out on the spacious wooden deck tucking into your meals or watching the birds, the cute Samango monkeys, red duiker, mongoose and other local residents. It's a short walk down a boardwalk to the long, empty beach where you can stroll to your heart's content, stopping to swim, to explore the rock pools at the point, to snorkel or fish. Various tours are offered, including sundowner and birding trips, kayaking on Lake Sibaya, scuba diving and, between November and February, turtle tours can be booked at the office. And should you prefer to sleep under your own canvas there are eight rustic campsites. – Fiona McIntosh

035 474 1504, res@mabibibeachcamp.co.za, www.mabibibeachcamp.co.za



7

Mozambique Lugenda Wilderness Camp Niassa Reserve

There are few places left in Africa that are true wilderness. Imagine a place so remote, it's a 90-minute flight from the nearest town, there's no cellphone signal, and locals still barter and trade with each other. Vast herds of sable, elephant, lion, leopard and antelope roam in this protected reserve, while unusual small mammals and the critically endangered African wild dog can also be found. At the heart of it is Lugenda Wilderness Camp, tented under giant sycamore fig trees and surrounded by granite inselbergs with the Lugenda River flowing past. This is a place for discerning wilderness lovers and is unfenced so wildlife is free to roam. The camp is largely self-sustaining, with solar lamps and torches, hot-water donkeys, and a huge, fresh vegetable garden to supply greens to the lodge. Tented suites in old Africa-style are appointed with mosquito nets and crisp, layered linen. Daily game drives and night drives happen when you'd like them to, there are guided game walks, or you can kayak, enjoy sundowners on a towering inselberg, sleep out in comfort under the stars, or clamber up into a cave to see rare pygmy rock art. It's all there, along with friendly staff passionate about wildlife and conservation.

– Keri Harvey

011 658 0633, enquiries@raniresorts.com
www.lugenda.com

8

Eastern Cape HillsNek Safari Camp Between PE & Grahamstown

The HillsNek lodge on the 7 200-hectare Amakhala Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape is situated high on the banks of the Bushmans River. Our spacious, luxury tent had an en-suite bathroom and romantic outside shower. After an exciting day of game drives we rolled up the canvas windows to a glorious sunset view from the bedroom and took a bubble bath. Later, a warm fire and delicious meal at the long table in the lodge



led to a lively discussion about the day's sightings. The reserve features five of the country's seven biomes, while lion, elephant, buffalo, giraffe, cheetah and white and black rhino can all be seen. A habitat for more than 60 mammal species and 250 listed birds, the reserve with its winding river is a unique safari adventure, while privacy and personalised attention made for a memorable experience at HillsNek.

– *Mark Lewis*

082 324 3484, res@hillsnek.com, www.hillsneksafaris.com

9

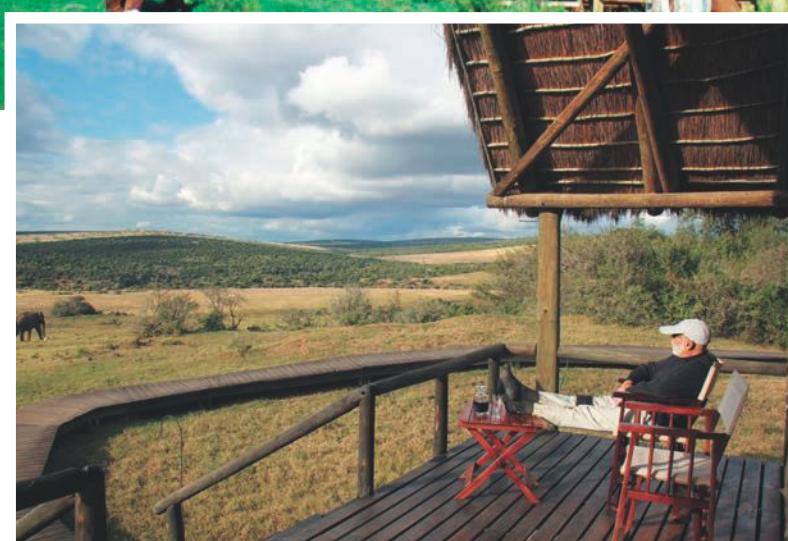
Eastern Cape Gorah Elephant Camp

Addo National Park

Gorah is a 5 000-hectare, five-star, private concession that lies deep in the heart of the Addo Elephant National Park and is known for the densest population of elephants in the world. The camp offers luxury tented accommodation and an authentic safari experience. The restored and period-furnished Gorah Manor House, built in 1856 and now a national monument, looks onto the plains and a waterhole 50m from the veranda, where herds of elephant and game stream past in a dazzling show. At night, illuminated only by lamplight and candles, delicious dinners are topped by unforgettable elephant walk-bys. What a privilege

to experience Africa at its finest. Escorted by a ranger, we retired to our solar-powered, tented suite under a thatched canopy (one of 11 at the camp), with its king-size bed, en-suite bathroom and private terrace looking out over the panoramic landscape. And around midnight, we heard the nearby grunt and roar of a lion at a kill... – *Mark Lewis*

042 235 1123/4, gorah@hunterhotels.com, www.gorah.com



Camping Gear

A selection of nifty kit for your camping trip

COMPILED BY LINDA PIEGL



FIRED UP

This portable Chiminea fire pot doubles up as a fireplace and a cooker. Place the cooking crown on top, which fits into the flue, and you have a mini braai grid/stove top. It weighs about 10kg and is made from volcanic clay found only in Central Mexico. R1 750
www.mexicanimports.co.za



BREAKING BREAD

Enjoy freshly baked bread made in this cast-iron, bread-baking pan. The rimmed lid also holds coals so you can make a delicious crust. The cast iron has been treated to prevent rust and it's easy to clean with hot, soapy water. Makes one large loaf. R532 (plus free carry bag)
www.campworld.co.za



IN A FLASH

Two minutes is all it takes to boil two cups of our coffee water with this compact outdoor stove. The Jetboil Flash Personal Cooking System works with a gas canister and everything you need to set it up in a flash is stored inside the cooking cup. R1 449 (gas canister and pot stabiliser sold separately)
www.trappers.co.za



COOL QUAFFING

Keep your vino chilled in this cooler that can fit two 750ml bottles. Made of durable material, it has a waterproof liner so that spills won't seep through. You can also reduce the size with the side straps to fit one bottle. R260
www.howlingmoon.co.za



BIG BROTHER

The Groot Boet Camo Stretcher is extra wide and long, with a strong, steel frame, a double layer of polyester in macho camo print and 160kg capacity. It also has anti-slip legs caps. R1 368
www.campworld.co.za



TRAIL READY

The XT Classic Trailer Tent is great for camping in rugged areas where it would be difficult to take a caravan. It fits off-road trailers with a height from the ground of between 155cm and 160cm. The base fits onto the trailer top and forms a double bed – you get a comfy mattress with it. The tent opens outwards giving you extra living space the size of a small room next to the trailer. R15 170

www.howlingmoon.co.za



ON THE SIDE

Add a vintage safari feel to your camping trip with this beautiful wooden and brass Harry Moon side table. It's lightweight (only 5kg) and compact, so you can collapse it and roll it up. It comes with a canvas cover and heavy-duty drawstring carry bag. R1 950

www.melvillandmoon.com



PURPLE HAZE

In this chair you'll stand out from the camping crowd and do it in style. A glass holder has been built into one arm rest and a cooler compartment into the other with room for your favourite bottle. Rubber 'feet' keep the chair stable on sand (and after a few, we presume), and it can handle up to 130kg. R549

www.trappers.co.za



BAG 'n BUCKET

Keep your drinking water cold the old-fashioned way by hanging this 5L car water bag (left) in front of your vehicle. R179. And after all that travelling, there's nothing like a shower in the bush. This PVC shower bucket is quick and easy to use – just dangle from a tree and let the sun warm the water beforehand. R599

www.bushtecadventure.co.za

Bird's-eye View

Meet Peter Chadwick, committed conservationist,
renowned photographer and passionate birder

WORDS DALE MORRIS PICTURES DALE MORRIS AND PETER CHADWICK





MAIN: Although Chadwick's work takes him across the world, he is often found along South Africa's coastline taking pictures of sea birds. **ABOVE:** A trio of gulls watches as Peter photographs their colony.



I am standing next a 2 000-year-old shell midden in De Hoop Nature Reserve in the Western Cape, admiring the azure ocean, when an assailant drops from the sky and gives me a jolly good trouncing. I am pecked and slapped about the head with pretty strong wings before being pooped on.

"Oh good shot," says Peter Chadwick (46), award-winning conservation photographer and long-time birding contributor to COUNTRY LIFE magazine. "I think you've strayed a little too close to their nesting colony. You're making them nervous."

I'm on Peter's old stomping ground (he was once the manager of De Hoop Nature Reserve) among the beautiful rolling dune fields of De Hoop's coastal region, one of Peter's haunts for photographing his favourite subjects – seabirds. Click, click, click... and half an hour later he walks away from the ridge overlooking the noisy seagull colony with memory cards stuffed with lekker images of the parents feeding their scraggly (but ever so cute) offspring.

The scene down there on the coast next to De Hoop's beaches reminds me of my childhood holidays. The sound of cawing gulls. The gentle lap of waves. The smell of salty air and sunblock. What a place it is to visit, Peter's 'office'. This, and places like it, are where he spends his days at work. Lucky sod.

But Chadwick takes his job very seriously, and you won't find him lounging in a deckchair when he's at the beach. Rather, he spends his time crawling around in bird droppings, or up to his elbows in sand or water or mud, but it's all for a good cause. And fighting a good cause with his camera as primary weapon is what Peter Chadwick does best.

"The difference between conservation photography and straight wildlife photography, is that conservation photographers use their images to bring about change for the benefit of the planet," Peter tells me, as we make our way along a crumbling coastal cliff path. "A wildlife image should tell a story on behalf of the animal, don't you think?"

For 30 years Peter worked in formal conservation, before moving to Bredasdorp five years ago on the southern Cape coast with his wife Sonja and daughters Suné (12) and Xanté (10), when the girls needed to attend school. At that stage, he had been

the general manager at De Hoop for five years. With his move to Bredasdorp, he joined WWF-South Africa as manager of the Integrated Ocean Use Programme. "I had to coordinate the improved management and possible expansion of Marine Protected Areas in South Africa, and provide support to other African Marine Protected Areas.

Peter's time in conservation has taken him from the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, where he worked for the Mammal Research Unit and Cambridge University on the social dynamics of the suricate, across to the Drakensberg mountains where he managed a number of the conservation areas.

"I also spent time in Kruger National Park, monitoring rare breeding birds in the northern sector for the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology. I needed to determine populations of selected rare and endangered species that included larger eagles and vultures, and many of the iconic smaller species."

Peter's work in park management has also seen him travel the globe, providing strategic operational advise on protected area management, and he has also been a key speaker at many events aimed at bringing environmental awareness to the public.

But it doesn't end there. As a staunch soldier in the battle against illegal wildlife trade, he has, in various locations over the years, set up and trained anti-poaching units and rapid-response teams that react directly to wildlife and conservation crime-related issues. "I then deployed with these teams – on land and sea – and the numerous arrests resulted in many hours in court pursuing convictions of suspected poachers."

But it was only after 2011, when his image of African Black Oystercatchers, taken on Malgas Island in the West Coast National Park, won the prestigious Gerald Durrell Award for Endangered Wildlife Photography, that Peter decided to make his camera the primary component of, as he describes it, his conservation toolbox.

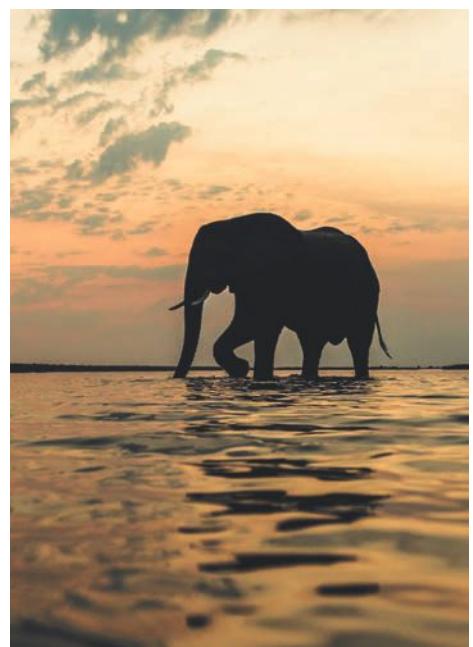
"And it was these little guys who sort of started it all," he says. We pause at a cluster of rocks on which sits a pair of jet-black, red-billed oystercatchers. One of Peter's all-time favourite species. "I've always been a keen photographer," says Peter "But winning that award opened my eyes to the possibilities of combining photography and



A selection of Peter Chadwick's photographs. ABOVE: Shadows of Kelp Gulls on the beach as the birds hover over a net haul of mullet on Strandfontein Beach, Cape Town. RIGHT: A subsistence fisherman holds up his catch of red stumpnose. Over-fishing has seen a sharp decline in many line fish. BELOW RIGHT: Peter's award-winning photograph on Malgas Island, West Coast National Park, of a small flock of African Black Oystercatchers taking to flight as a wave pounds the boulder they are congregating on. At one point there were 4 500 oystercatchers but the population has risen to 6 000.



ABOVE: Getting his feet wet. Peter photographs the freshwater birds on a lake in De Hoop. (Photo Dale Morris) BELOW LEFT: Each evening in the Arabian Gulf thousands of sharks are hauled ashore. Here four shark species lie on the blocks for auction. Large-scale shark slaughter for fins is having a hugely detrimental effect on the healthy functioning of the oceans. BELOW RIGHT: For the elephants and many more species, Peter believes humans have a moral obligation to ensure that the rampant poaching pandemic is stopped.





LEFT: A Cape Gannet pauses from preening to stare down Chadwick. The global population of Cape Gannets has decreased by more than 20 per cent in just three generations.

conservation as a full-time vocation."

A few years back, Peter and conservation photographer Thomas Peschak sat down and formulated a plan on how they could raise awareness of the perilous state of the South African marine environment. "Our marine ecosystems are in dire straits because of misuse and overfishing, but everyone likes marine birds," he says. "We thought we might be able to use these charismatic species – the oystercatchers, gannets, penguins and the like – as poster boys for the bigger story.

We discussed the power that good photos can have on social conscience and we talked about matching these images with written media."

And so, armed with big lenses and big ideas, Tom and Peter headed off to Malgas Island for a week of pre-planned shooting. What they came back with was Peter's award-winning image of oystercatchers, and a photo of gannets by Tom that bagged him one of the ultra-prominent World Press Photographer of the Year prizes.

"Our objective was not to win these competitions for our own aggrandisement, but to get the story out there on how and why our marine species are being killed off by man's mistreatment of the oceans." Those two images, along with the story of how the birds are facing extinction, reached, in Peter's estimate, more than 50 million people.

We spend the next few hours seeking out dainty little fynbos flowers, an indigenous adder snake (that eludes us) and yet more ostentatious seabirds, before sunset lowers our shutter speeds to the point where we are no longer able to shoot. It's then back to De Hoop's Cape Dutch-style, self-catering cottages for a cup of coffee, a chat and an early night.

"The problem with most modern-day wildlife photographers," says Peter, as we sit on a sofa and flick through a pile of local and international magazines in which his stories have been published, "is that they don't really care about the plight of their subjects. We professional wildlife image makers have



“...conservation photographers use their images to bring about change for the benefit of the planet. A wildlife image should tell a story on behalf of the animal”



ABOVE: Pristine coastal fynbos meets the sea at De Hoop Nature Reserve. TOP RIGHT: Peter Chadwick – committed family man, conservationist, writer, birder and wildlife photographer. (Photos Dale Morris)



ABOVE: The power of the Chadwick lens.



More of Peter Chadwick's superb images. TOP RIGHT: At Lake Nakuru National Park, Kenya, two Cape buffalo bulls nuzzle in friendship. ABOVE LEFT: Many marine species, especially abalone, are part of an illicit trade and end up as the 'cash crop' for buying drugs and supporting gangs in highly organised crime. ABOVE RIGHT: Fynbos vegetation needs regular controlled burning for its persistence. Smoke from the fires is particularly important as a stimulus that gets dormant seeds to germinate.

a moral obligation to use our art to do something positive in the world.

"There are many pros out there, in the bush, on the oceans, taking amazing photographs, but they seem far more interested in using their images to boost their own fame and egos rather than actually doing any good with them. I detect very little sincerity among the current flock of well-known wildlife photographers, and that's something that frustrates me very, very much. Each of us has the ability to make a positive change and, if we harness the power of the individual, we will end up with a powerful wave of people calling for change, and that cannot be ignored."

The next few years will see Peter visiting many countries throughout Africa, training his lens on sea birds and mammals and landscapes and plants. He will be working with conservation organisations, giving lectures on wildlife and photography, and using his skills as an artist, a writer and a conservationist to help bring about

positive change before, as he says, "it's too late and we end up destroying the very environment we ourselves depend on."

For now, he is busy with a number of marine projects that will take him to the Caribbean, the Seychelles and East Africa. Two of these projects will focus on the proclamation of new Marine Protected Areas. "In the third project I'll be part of a team from the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association, helping to improve the management capacity of Marine Protected Area personnel in the Western Indian Ocean sub-region."

Peter is also part of a team from the Game Rangers Association of Africa that is currently assessing the management effectiveness of South Africa's protected areas, where guidelines to improve such management will be developed. "And soon I'll be providing training and mentoring support again for anti-poaching teams in the fight against rhino and elephant poaching. On the conservation photography front, I continue to support BirdLife South Africa

by promoting the need for better seabird and ocean protection. I am also helping to promote the need for support and awareness around birding in Mozambique." And then there's his ongoing work with the Table Mountain Fund to raise awareness of the conservation of the Cape Floristic Kingdom.

Despite, by his own reckoning, that we still have many battles in the conservation war, despite the escalating numbers of dead rhinos and elephants, and despite the undeniable fact that the seas are being emptied of life, Peter remains an optimist. "I will always do what I can, wherever and however I can, for conservation. Even if it's just to take a photo that tells a story. It might be a small seed, but if you don't plant seeds, you can't grow a forest." ■

Map reference G3 see inside back cover

Peter Chadwick 082 373 4190

www.peterchadwick.co.za

[log: www.photodestination.co.za](http://www.photodestination.co.za)

www.facebook.com/peter.ian.chadwick



Knysna Woodpecker

Storms River Mouth

... where the ocean is master of the Tsitsikamma universe

WORDS AND PICTURES PETER CHADWICK WWW.PETERCHADWICK.CO.ZA

BIRDING HOTSPOT ▶ STORMS RIVER MOUTH



ABOVE: Watching the pounding waves from a tranquil pool near a waterfall. ABOVE RIGHT: A rock hyrax mother and her youngster catch the last of the day's sun.

In the pre-dawn light, silhouettes of Kelp Gulls glided and dipped above the sea as the waves surged into narrow gullies. Rock hyraxes emerged, cautiously peering out of their boulder hideaways before clambering up to warm themselves on the rocks.

Nearby, a pair of African Black Oystercatchers wheeled in a tight dance, all the while calling loudly. Further out to sea, humpback whales puffed out spray on their journey north to the tropical ocean of the Mozambique Channel. There they would mate and calve before heading south again to colder waters.

In this Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park, the coastal forest was drenched in life-giving mist. Bushbuck ewes and their large-eyed lambs emerged from the dense forest shadows to nibble at leaves. Flocks of Red-winged Starlings (7 on checklist) turned in unison to land in the canopies of large fruiting trees.

In the thickly packed, red-flowered *Aloe arborescens*, male Amethyst- (1), Greater Double-collared- (9) and Malachite Sunbirds, all decked out in iridescent costume, chased one another with a mad intensity, stopping occasionally to probe their decurved bills into the aloe inflorescence to drink the nectar.

Not a soul was seen as I wandered along the trail that lead through the forest from the Storms River Mouth restaurant, to the massive swing bridge about a kilometre away. Ferns and creepers covered the ground and, in among the tangled roots of gnarled trees, mushrooms

and other fungi showed a miniature world busy at work on the forest floor.

In the canopy of ancient yellowwoods, Knysna Turacos (3) flashed crimson as they opened their wings, mewling to one another like a chorus of tomcats out on territory patrol.

I found a shy birding party of Olive Bush-Shrike, Cape Batis (10), Dusky Flycatcher, Bar-throated Apalis, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Black-backed Puffback and Terrestrial Brownbuls moving rapidly through the undergrowth. Soon I was out in the open again, and climbed down a steep trail to the swing bridge over the Storms River, where it entered the sea in a mass of Coca-Cola-coloured water.

A lone White-breasted Cormorant (5) swam below, repeatedly diving into the murky water. Above me, White-rumped-, Black- and Alpine Swifts flew at great speed, scooping up aerial plankton with wide-open beaks. A Jackal Buzzard launched itself from the cliff-face and was immediately set upon by a pair of White-necked Ravens (6) that dive-bombed and chased it from sight.

Back at our comfortable wooden chalet that had magnificent views of the waves pounding the shoreline, I found my wife, Sonja and daughters Suné and Xanté up and about, and we sat on the deck enjoying breakfast as pods of bottlenose and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins entertained us, leaping about and surfing the waves.

Cape Cormorants flew east in large v-shaped flocks that carefully avoided the Swift- and Sandwich Terns that dive-bombed into the water in search of fish. Our meal attracted the attention



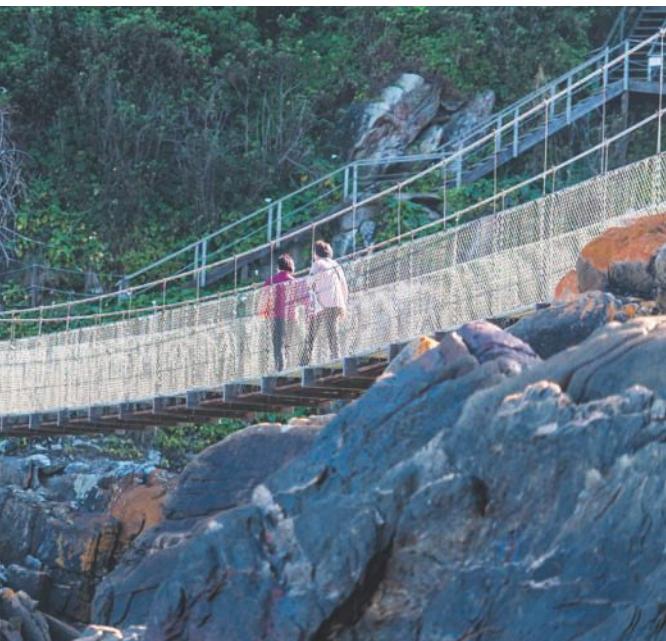
of Cape Weavers, Southern Boubous, Cape Robin-Chats and a small family of Red-necked Spurfowls (2) that all hoped for a crumb or three.

After breakfast we set off along the trail that heads to the large waterfall, and that is part of day one of the renowned Otter Trail. The narrow coastal path was an easy start, but the trail then had us boulder hopping and clambering around huge rocks and across wooden bridges that spanned deep ravines.

We had a quick explore of the massive and deeply incised Guano Cave, and then continued to the waterfall that fell into a large pool before it tumbled into the sea. We were just in time to watch a pair of Giant Kingfishers making repeated dips into the cold water, and a pair of very tame Kelp Gulls joined us as we enjoyed a picnic lunch and brief swim.

Other families soon joined us and the kids splashed about in the pool while more serious hikers strode past on their way to the first night's destination of the Otter Trail.

On our way back, we followed the Blue Duiker Trail that led upwards and away from



the coast into the depths of the forest. Under the dark canopy we had to listen for movement and calls of the birds to see them. Lemon Doves exploded from the leaf litter at our feet and Olive Thrushes gave their high-pitched alarm calls as we passed.

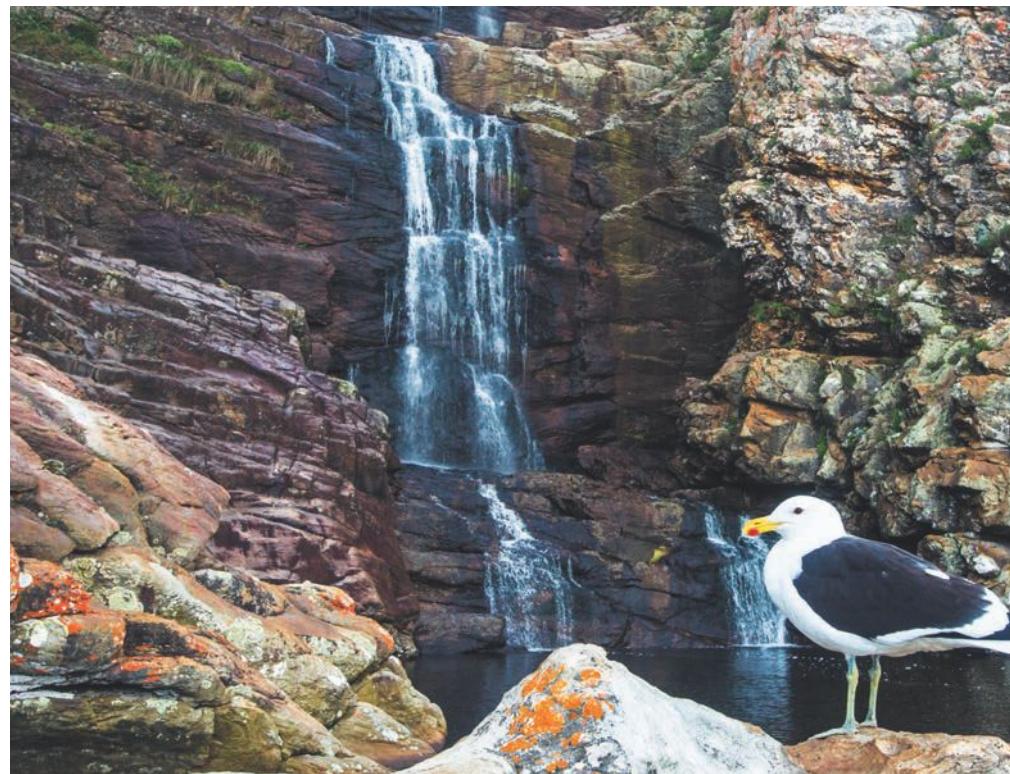
'Frog' calls that we heard from a thicket turned out to belong to a mimicking Chorister Robin-Chat. Sombre Greenbuls, Green-backed Cameroptera and Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler (8) were all found by their calls.

The drumming against a dead branch showed the highlight of our trip – a pair of Knysna Woodpeckers searching for food. Along the trail, shy blue duikers scampered into the dense shadows of the undergrowth, and we also found signs of snuffling bushpig, and the scat of caracal.

After an afternoon snooze back at the chalet, we were greeted by masses of late-afternoon, puffy pink clouds. A short stroll past the campsite and the swimming pool and we found a jumble of rocks and a small bay where we watched the fading light.

Just behind the breakwater, fin-thrashing,

TOP LEFT: Cape Cormorants take a breather from their fishing expedition. TOP RIGHT: Hikers along the renowned Otter Trail at sunset. ABOVE LEFT: The suspension bridge across the Storms River. ABOVE: There is plenty of varying accommodation at Storms River Mouth Rest Camp. BELOW: A Kelp Gull surveys the scene at the waterfall, which is reached on the first day of the Otter Trail.



BIRDING HOTSPOT ▶ STORMS RIVER MOUTH



tail-slapping and breaching humpback whales were quite a sight. Together with grazing rock hyraxes, a Spotted Thick-knee, Cattle Egrets and Cape Wagtails (4) wandered the lawns around the swimming pool.

Suddenly, a movement in the bay drew our attention to a dark shadow gliding through the water, one that transformed into a feeding Cape clawless otter. We sat motionless, awed by the otter's confidence in the rough waves. He dived and bobbed up again without apparent worry,

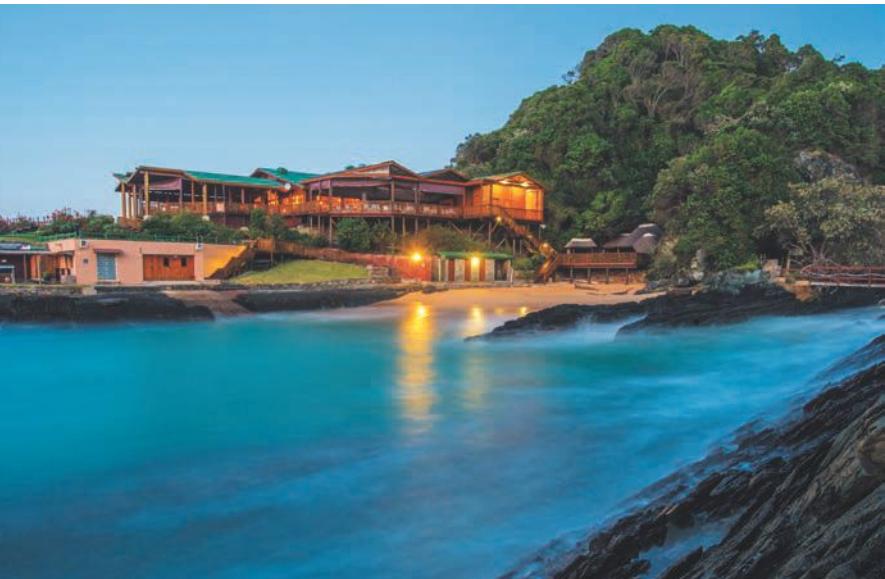
and with the occasional morsel in his paws. A second and then a third otter joined in, well-aware of our presence but quite ignoring us, one of them demolishing a large crab just metres from where we sat.

As darkness fell and the skies burst into millions of stars, my family was in complete agreement that the sea was indeed the great master and controller of all that happened at Tsitsikamma. ■

Map reference G4 see inside back cover



TOP: A Cape clawless otter emerges from his hunt for supper. ABOVE LEFT: An arum lily in bloom. ABOVE RIGHT: Bottlenose dolphins show surfers how it's done. BELOW: The Storms River campsite. RIGHT: The nutrient-rich nectar of the bright *Aloe arborescens* flowers are a magnet for many bird species and insects. BOTTOM: The popular Storms River Restaurant at dawn.



SEASON & WEATHER

The climate is Mediterranean with warm summers and mild winters. Wind is present throughout the year with rain mainly in winter. Always be prepared for sudden changes in the weather. Summers are dry and dusty, while in winter the fynbos is lush and largely in flower. The best months to visit are April and September.

HABITAT

The Garden Route is well known for its last remaining patches of coastal forest that are bisected by tannin-rich rivers. Coastal thicket and fynbos are also present.

SPECIALS

African Black Oystercatcher

Knysna Turaco

Knysna Woodpecker

Chorister Robin-Chat

Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler

Olive Bushshrike

Cape Clawless Otter

ACCOMMODATION & ACTIVITIES

There are numerous hiking trails in the Storms River area, the Otter Trail the most famous. Further information regarding these trails can be obtained from the Tsitsikamma office at Storms River Mouth. Excellent accommodation facilities are available and vary from camping to self-catering chalets and ocean units. There is a restaurant and shop.

GETTING THERE

The Storms River section of the Garden Route National Park is just off the N2 in the Southern Cape and is well signposted from the main highway. It lies on the border of the Western and Eastern Cape.

CONTACT

SANParks central reservations

012 343 1991, www.sanparks.org



CHECKLIST 10 specials to try and spot at Storms River Mouth

1 The **Amethyst Sunbird** (*Swartsuikerbekkie*) range is extending westwards and it is now a common bird on forest edges and in gardens along the Western Cape coastal strip. The male appears all black with a purple throat and green forehead that become iridescent in the sun.

2 The **Red-necked Spurfowl** (*Rooikeelfisant*) is relatively common on the edges of forest and thicket. Usually found in small family parties, with males having sharp spurs on their lower legs, it has been known to hybridise on occasion with Swainson's Spurfowl.

3 Restricted to Afromontane forest, where it feeds in fruiting trees, the **Knysna Turaco** (*Knysnaalerie*) has a shorter, rounder crest than the Livingstone's Turaco and is found at higher elevations where the distribution of the two species overlaps.

4 A common resident that tames easily around campsites and in gardens, the **Cape Wagtail** (*Gewone Kwikkie*) preys on small flies and other small ground insects that are pursued on foot.

5 The **White-breasted Cormorant** (*Witborsduiker*) pursues its prey underwater, grasping it with its sharp hook-tipped bill. Prey is swallowed head first. It's a colonial breeder that builds rough platforms of sticks, and its usual clutch is three pale-blue eggs.

6 Scavenging for most of its food, the **White-necked Raven** (*Withalskraal*) can be found in large, loose flocks, where food is plentiful. It usually breeds on a rocky ledge, building a rough stick nest that may also be usurped from larger raptors.

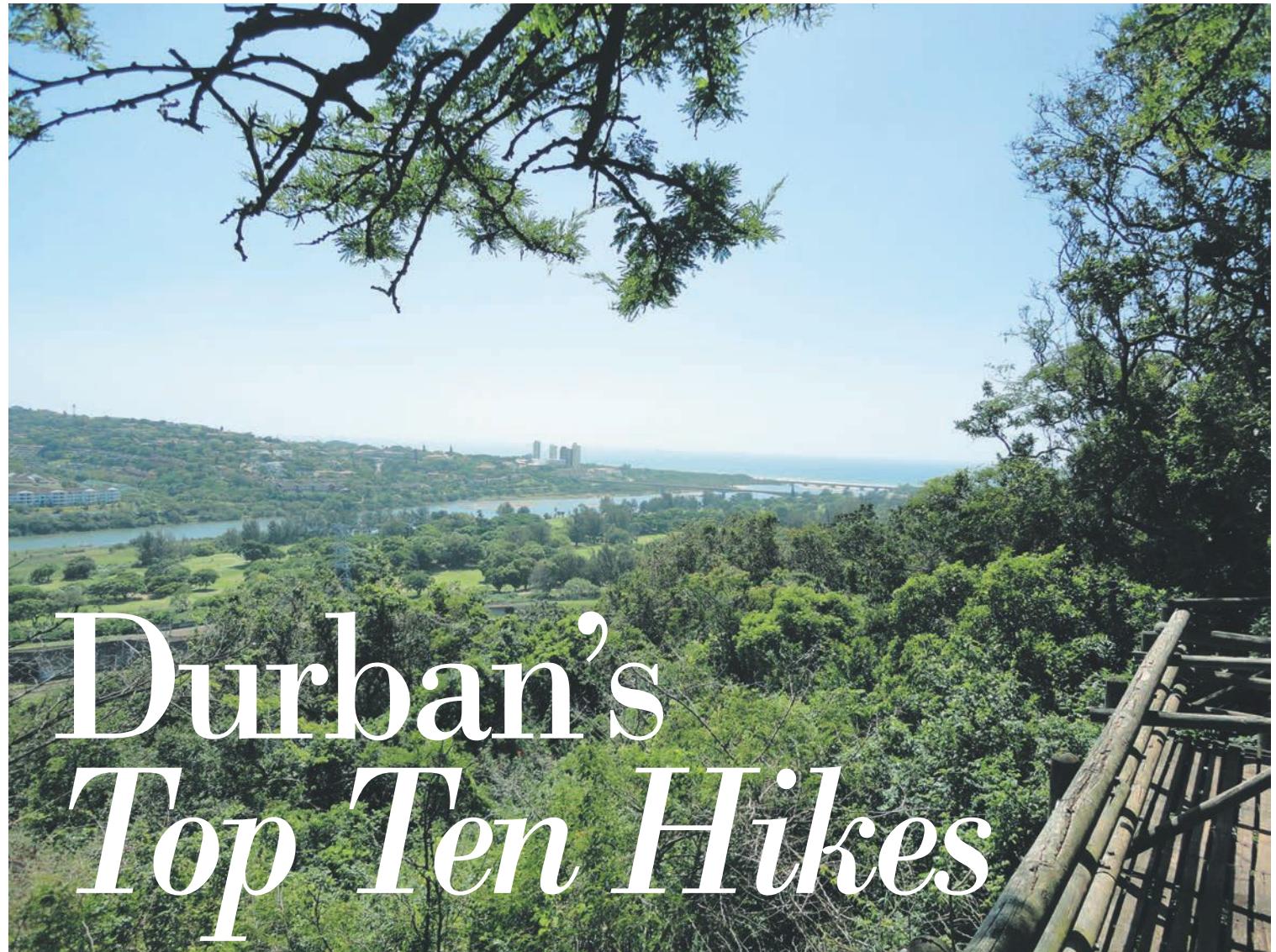
7 The **Red-winged Starling** (*Rooivlerkspreeu*) is one of the bigger starlings and is found in large flocks during the winter months, when it ranges widely

search of food. It inhabits rocky areas of cliffs and ravines.

8 Restricted to evergreen forest, the **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler** (*Geelkeelsanger*) is usually found singly or in pairs in the forest canopy where it forages for small insects. It is often found in mixed bird parties and particularly favours moving with White-eyes.

9 The **Greater Double-collared Sunbird** (*Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie*) is noticeably larger than the similar-looking Southern Double-collared Sunbird, with a longer, heavier bill. The male also has a broader red breast band than its smaller relative.

10 The **Cape Batis** (*Kaapsebonstrokkie*) male has a black chest band that is chestnut in the female. Usually found in pairs, they often accompany other forest birds in a birding party, and forage for small insects in forest canopies and bushes.



Durban's Top Ten Hikes

Be surprised by the great escapes in nature reserves, conservancies, dams and coastline in and around the city

WORDS AND PICTURES SHAEN ADEY

1 Burman Bush Nature Reserve

A thick pocket of coastal bush plum in the suburb of Morningside, the reserve offers three trails, the most rewarding the easy Hadeda Trail named for the number of Hadeda Ibises that roost in the 40m-high *Albizia adianthifolia* trees. Known as flat crowns, these trees create a magnificent canopy that provides glorious shade for a hike.

Although the Hadeda Trail is only a kilometre long it can easily take an hour as the indigenous forest is fascinating. The reserve is home to the largest number of blue duiker in Durban and surrounds, as well as various butterfly species. It is one of the best places in and around the city for bird watching, with birds that include the Lanner Falcon, Purple-crested Turaco, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Paradise Flycatcher and an uncommon resident, the Buff-spotted Flufftail. You might well be entertained by vervet monkeys, but keep an eye on them, particularly if you're using the picnic or braai facilities at the gate, as they're

TOP: The wooden viewing platform on the northern side of the Burman Nature Reserve with its elevated view over the Umgeni River.
RIGHT: A simple way of ensuring your walk through the reserve is not disturbed.



cunning and quick when it comes to stealing your food.

The three trails intersect often so you can extend the walk by leaving the Hadeda Trail at roughly the halfway point and following the red markers that lead you out of the tree canopy onto a wooden deck with stunning views over the Umgeni River. **031 312 4466, www.durban.gov.za**



2 Ballito North to Salt Rock

If you want a superb coastal walk start at Ballito North and head to Salt Rock (or vice versa). The 5km route takes a little more than an hour at a comfortable pace but the fascinating rock platforms, beautiful beaches and great tidal pools can easily detain you for a day.

Park near the Galley Beach Bar & Grill, head down the steps and turn left. In holiday season you might find sand artists at work here who, for a minimal charge, will happily let you pose for a photograph with their masterpieces. Charlie's Pool, an Olympic-size tidal pool in Thompsons Bay about halfway along, is a great place to stop. After that you cross the beach and come to a rocky section called Shaka's Rock, where enemies of the Zulu king met a nasty end. There are more cliffs ahead, with an optional path over the top so you can bypass the rocky platforms at high tide, before you find another tempting tidal pool just before the final stretch along Umhali Beach to Salt Rock Salt Caravan Park.

3 Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve

Consisting of an estuary, dune forest and coastal forest, this pretty and diverse reserve near the busy holiday town of Umhlanga Rocks is an important refuge for a range of wetland, coastal and forest animals, plants and birds, and is a popular family escape.

A scenic trail starts at the car park at the end of the O'Connor Promenade and, once you're through the gates (open 06h00-18h00) there's a wooden boardwalk across the Ohlange River before the trail heads into thick coastal forest. Finally, after much meandering through dune forest it pops out at the beach. With the lagoon on one side and the sea on the other, this huge stretch of golden sand is a bit of a nudists escape, so if skinny-dipping is your thing you can leave your costume at home. The shell midden near the lagoon is worth a visit but remember that middens are of archaeological significance so look but don't touch.

082 559 2839, www.kznwildlife.com

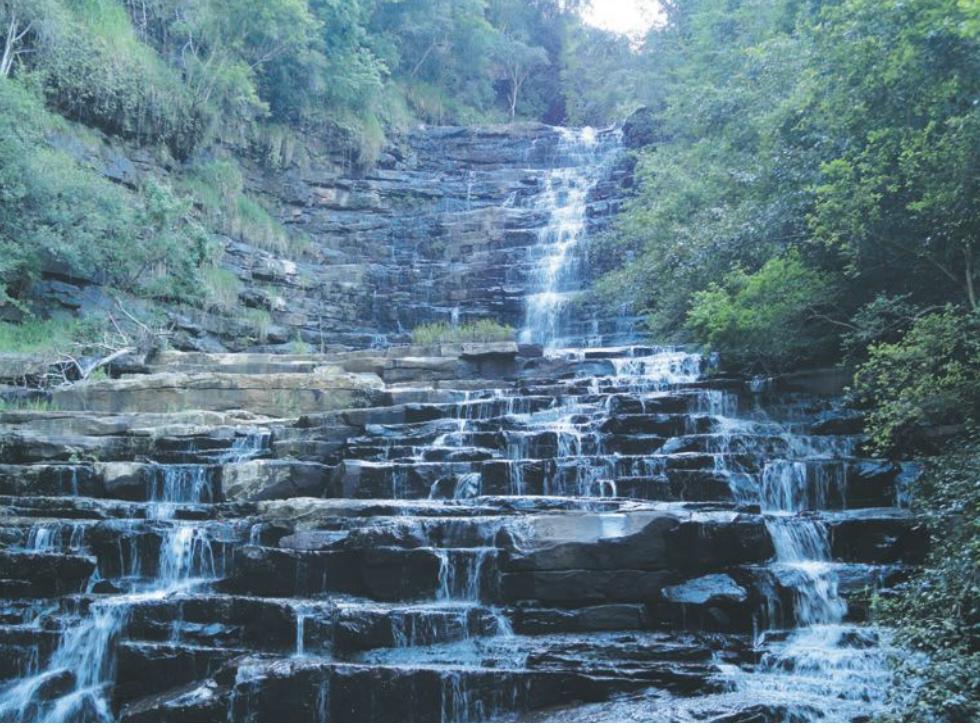
ABOVE: A sand artist with his Big Five sculpture on the beach at Ballito. **BETWEEN:** Wait on the wooden boardwalks in the Beachwood Mangroves and you'll see little creatures slowly emerge from the mud. **BOTTOM:** The unspoilt beach at Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve, stretching for miles between the lagoon and the ocean.

4 Beachwood Mangroves Nature Reserve

The Beachwood Mangroves is an important estuarine habitat at the Umgeni River mouth, known for having the largest number of black and white mangrove trees in the Durban area. The fragile ecosystem falls under Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and is only open to the public on the third Saturday of the month (08h00 until 13h00), when honorary officers are present, or by prior arrangement. The easy 1km circular trail meanders along sections of boardwalk through the 76-hectare swamp but allow an hour for the hike as there's plenty to distract you. And try to go at low tide as that's the best time to spot the molluscs and thousands of fiddler crabs that thrive in the mud. If you look closely you might also spot bizarre, amphibious mudskippers, which look a bit like fish out of water. If you want to head to the beach you can detour off the boardwalk about halfway along the trail.

082 559 2839, www.kznwildlife.com





5 Krantz Kloof Nature Reserve

The well-known Krantz Kloof Nature Reserve in the Kloof area west of Durban has a variety of trails of differing levels of difficulty, including the challenging Molweni and Nqutu trails. The 6km Molweni Trail (also known as the Yellow Trail) is strenuous and the only trail that leads to the base of the gorge.

Initially it follows the ridge line, offering glorious views over the forested gorge from a few hair-raising lookouts before dropping steeply to the Molweni River. Where the path crosses a small weir is a good turn-around point if you don't plan on going the whole way to the bottom. (It will take about 30 minutes to retrace your steps from here). From the weir, the trail drops steeply but the reward – a fabulous dip in the Molweni River at the bottom – is worth the slog back to your car. There are several breeding pairs of Crowned Eagles nesting in the area so listen (and look) out for them as you go.

031 764 3515, www.kznwildlife.com

6 Giba Gorge Nature Reserve

The picturesque McIntosh Falls, with their lush surroundings and deep plunge pool, are a highlight of this extensive gorge in the Hillcrest region west of Durban.

Starting at the Giba gates on St Helier Road, the route initially follows the Ukhoozi (Eagle) Trail through a beautiful section of indigenous forest, where the chances of spotting the trail's namesake are high. It branches off onto the Ndabushe (Caracal) Trail, which leads to the base of McIntosh Falls. It's a moderately difficult, 7km-return walk that will take the best part of three hours, but the falls are beautiful and the large, icy-cold pool is a must. If you happen to clamber above the falls you're in for a surprise when you spot the trunks of various indigenous trees painted pink and blue. Fear not, you are not losing the plot. The artwork is an attempt by conservationists to eliminate the value of the bark for the muti market.

079 391 1866, www.ggep.org

7 Paradise Valley Nature Reserve

It's hard to believe that there's a gem of a reserve tucked right near the massive flyovers of the Paradise Valley interchange on the N3 to Pietermaritzburg. But this really is paradise found.

All four trails in the reserve are scenic. The 2km, circular Waterfall Trail crosses wooden bridges and takes you past the historical waterworks (a national monument) as it follows the Umbilo River down to a superb waterfall, a particularly fun and easy walk for kids.

031 702 3443



TOP: The Molweni River has carved and shaped the beautiful gorges in the Krantz Kloof Nature Reserve. RIGHT: One of the wonderful old wooden bridges over the Umbilo River in Paradise Valley. BELOW: The trees in Giba Gorge are dwarfed by the 80m-high MacIntosh Falls.





8 Virginia Bush Nature Reserve

8 On the Durban North side, this is another easy city escape, plus it's dog friendly. The reserve is only 38-hectares in size but as you enter it's as if someone has pressed the mute button: the sounds from traffic on Newport Avenue just disappear.

The moderate, 2km circular route, takes you to the highest point where there are stunning views to the ocean in the distance. The trees are beautiful – many are labelled and include wild hibiscus, milkwood and huge Natal figs – and there's a small dam near the gate that attracts frogs and birds. It's a great place for relaxing after your hike.

083 631 9278, www.durban.gov.za

9 Shongweni Dam

The drive to Shongweni Dam between Durban and Pietermaritzburg takes you through rural communities so hiking here is not just a bush escape, it's a cultural experience.

The 1700ha game reserve has various game species, including curious zebra that venture close to hikers. Its bird list of more than 250 species features specials like the White-backed Night Heron, Martial Eagle, European Honey Buzzard, African Broadbill and African Finfoot. Walks in the reserve are guided, with the 3km Ntini Trail included in the cost of the minimal entrance fee.

The guides double as game guards and are usually out on patrol so be sure to call ahead to book. I loved the reserve so much that on my second visit I stayed overnight in one of the chalets on stilts at the water's edge.

031 769 1283, www.msinsi.co.za



10 Kenneth Stainbank Nature Reserve

If you want to stretch your legs and get up close to game, head just south of the city to the Kenneth Stainbank Nature Reserve, where there are more than 13km of hiking trails (and 10km of mountain-bike routes) to explore.

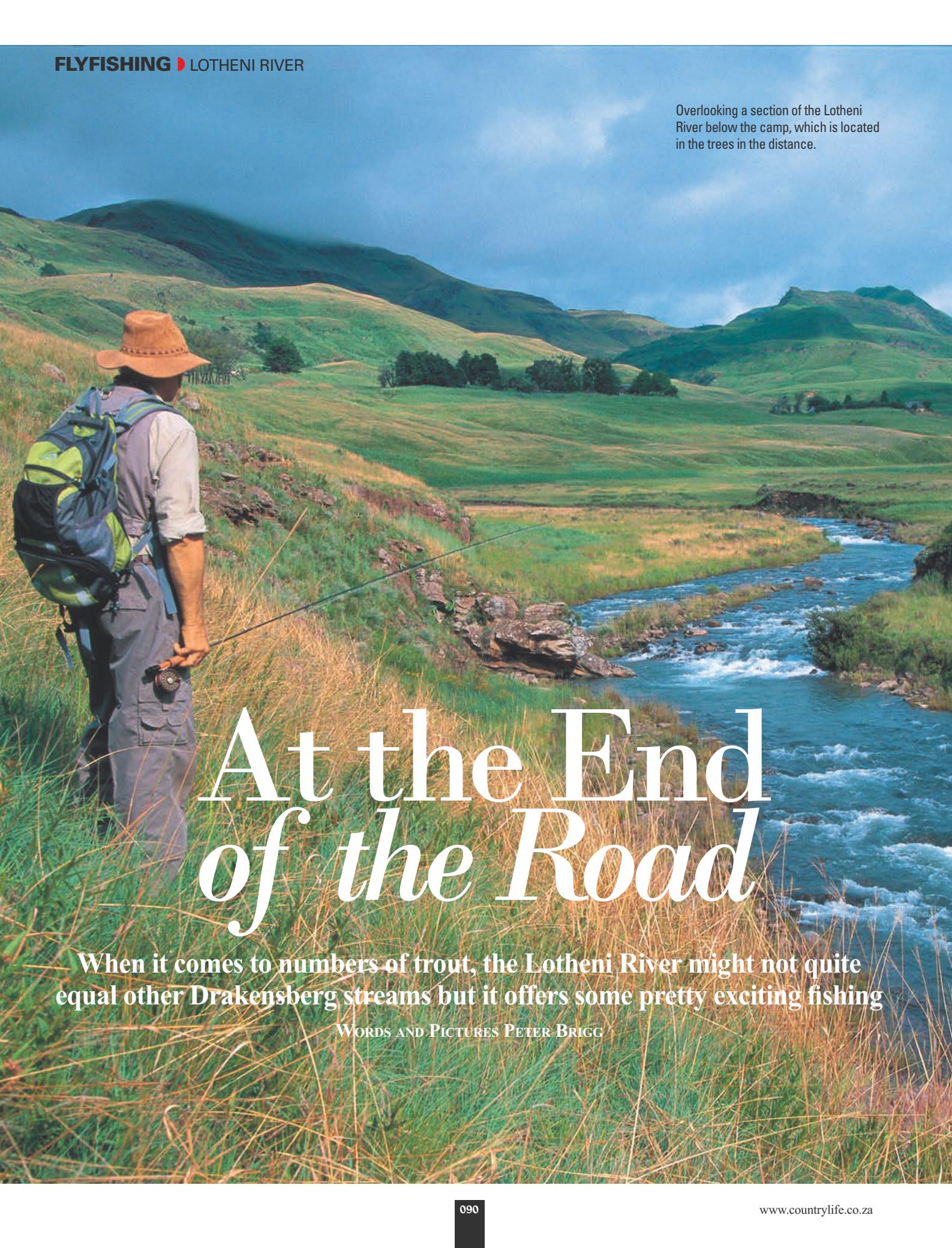
The circular Red Trail, which passes through sections of wetland, grassland and coastal forest, is a stunner that will take about two hours to complete. Zebra are regularly encountered in the grassland and the reserve also has bushbuck, reedbuck, impala, and blue-, red-, and grey duiker, plus velvet monkey and rock hyrax. There are also nocturnal species including slender mongoose, Egyptian mongoose, genet and bushbaby but, since the gates are only open from 06h00 to 18h00, you'll be lucky to spot them.

031 469 2807, www.kznwildlife.com

TOP: The paths in Virginia Bush Nature Reserve are well maintained, with sections of boardwalk. **RIGHT:** You can get really close to zebra in the grasslands of Kenneth Stainbank Nature Reserve. **BELOW:** The deck of one of Shongweni Dam's tented camps at the water's edge is a great place to relax after a hike and listen for the call of Fish Eagles.



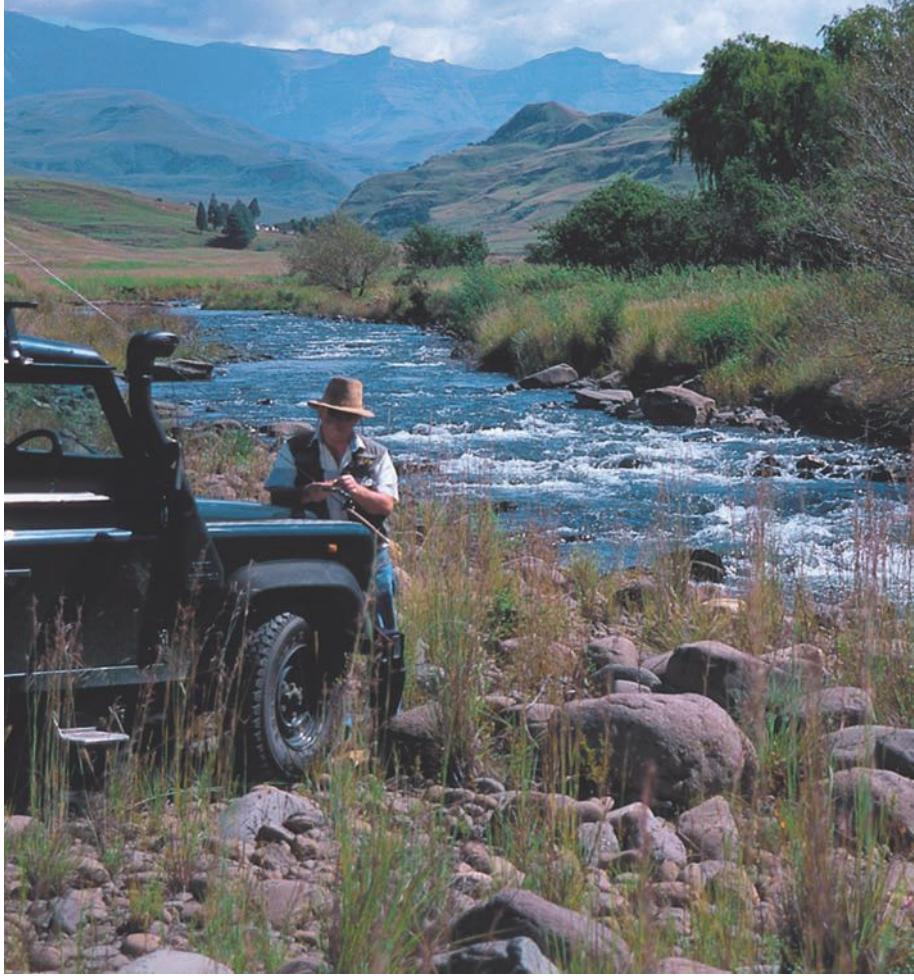
Overlooking a section of the Lotheni River below the camp, which is located in the trees in the distance.



At the End of the Road

When it comes to numbers of trout, the Lotheni River might not quite equal other Drakensberg streams but it offers some pretty exciting fishing

WORDS AND PICTURES PETER BRIGG



LEFT: Tackling up on the edge of the river before a challenging morning's fishing for wily brown trout. ABOVE: A dragonfly is covered in morning dew and unable to move until the sun dries its wings. BELOW: It is sometimes the small things that catch your attention, like the floral beauty of the Drakensberg environment.

Happiness for me is a lonely, dusty road in summer, with a tank of petrol and a boot full of fishing tackle. To escape the crowds of the city for the wonderful solitude of the river and its inhabitants. Breathe crisp, clean air and feel the sun on my back and the breeze on my face as I wade the river.

The upper Lotheni River is just such a place. Found in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site, it's at the end of a winding road that crosses the iNzinga River towards Underberg, before turning north-west onto the road to Lotheni Hatted Camp, tucked away in the foothills.

As with most Berg streams, the Lotheni is heavily dependent on regular rainfall and winter snow-melt and is at its prime when fining down after a spate. The brown trout that hide in these waters are part of a self-sustaining population whose ancestors were first introduced some 120

years ago. On the advice of the local staff, we concentrated our fishing on the 4-5km stretch between the small museum – just inside the entrance gate – and the camp.

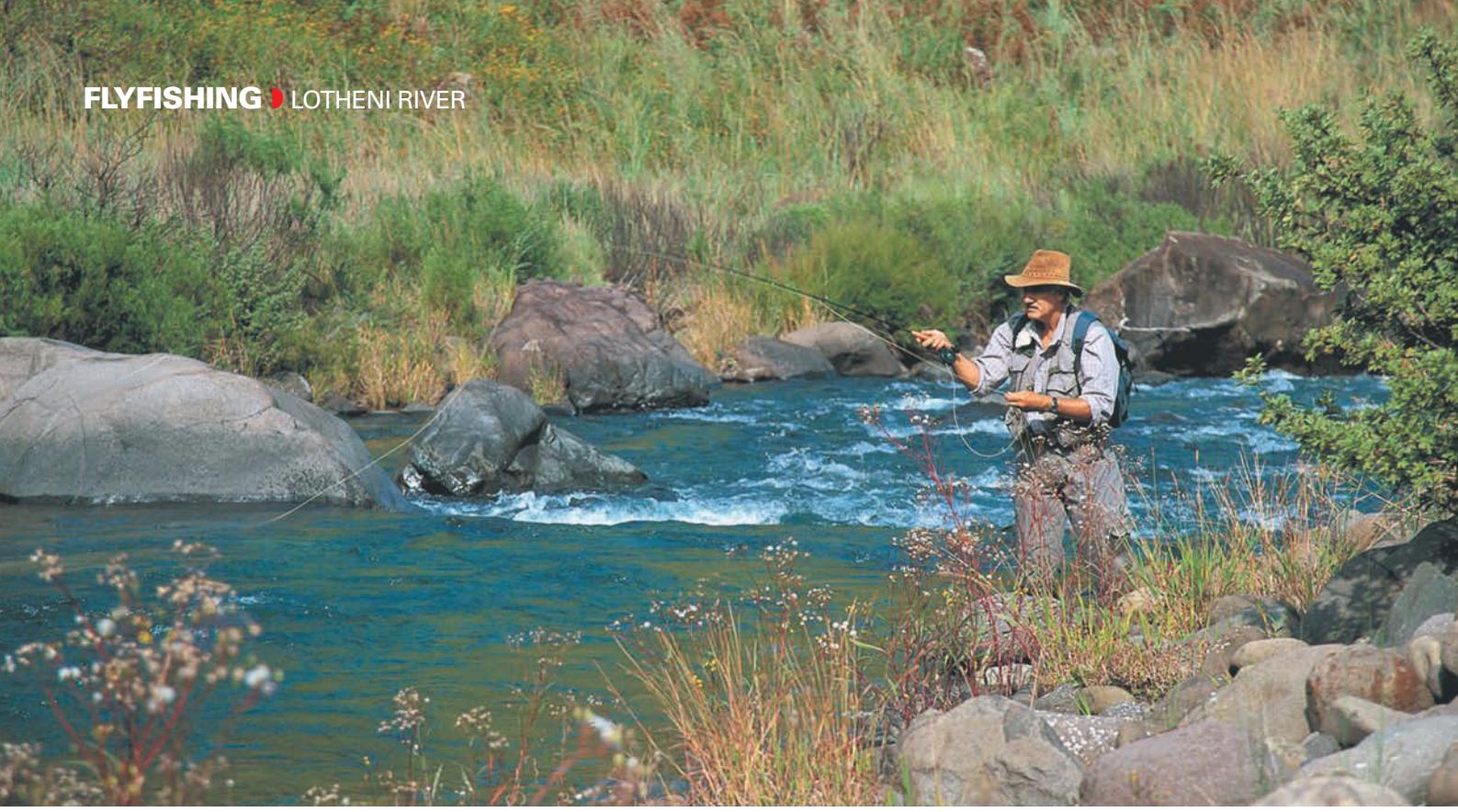
At this altitude the Lotheni has a steepish gradient and is swift flowing, regrouping occasionally in runs and the odd deeper pool, slowing as it cascades over the characteristic long, boulder-strewn riffles. In places the stream has literally carved its course into the bedrock.

At first glance, these are smooth, apparently barren sections, but they should never be overlooked, especially the oases of boulders sometimes found clustered in depressions in the bedrock that provide suitable holding spots for trout. And nor should the deeper pockets in areas of

broken water be ignored.

Browns are enigmatic fish, notoriously moody, often hiding in the most unlikely places, masters of camouflage and confounding in their recognition of fraud. Stealth is an important way of enhancing your chances on streams like the Lotheni,





The rod bucked as the feisty little fish protested throughout the short fight, all the way into my hand – a beautiful plump brownie

otherwise there is a better than good chance that you are going to be spotted long before your first cast. You are seldom given a second chance on this kind of water and, after a cast or two, it is best to move on.

For our efforts, we did manage to deceive a few trout. Despite the shallow conditions, and unlike many similar Berg streams where I have found dry flyfishing to be so rewarding, we struggled and were unable to move a single trout on the usually productive dries. This was not for want of the naturals as they were in evidence all around us.

By 09h00 on the first day, the wind picked up, casting became almost impossible, and we had no control over where our flies would land. Our light casts on wispy two-weight rods were simply no match for nature's force. So, with tangled tippets and the fear of chemically sharpened hooks being blown back into our faces, we left the stream for the shelter of our cottage and a welcome breakfast.

It wasn't until around 16h00 that the wind abated. In fact, it turned out to be

a pleasant afternoon, with an atmospheric feeling in the air as storm clouds gathered over the mountains.

Again the fishing was difficult and, although we spotted a few trout, it would have ended as a blank session had it not been for the single fish my son caught. I say blank, but in these exhilarating natural places it is seldom a disappointment; the pleasure of being surrounded by such mountain scenery, in the company of eland, kingfishers and eagles, compensates adequately.

By the time the sun had dipped below the rim of the escarpment, and the gathering clouds had darkened the sky, the wind switched direction to the east, and with it the temperature dropped as suddenly as if someone had opened the freezer door. We gave up and headed back to camp – the cold front had arrived.

Next morning we awoke to a cold, grey day, with soft rain and clouds hanging low over the mountains. With some reluctance we crawled from our beds to try the stretch around Cool Pools, about two kilometres



TOP: The author on a promising run on the Lotheni River. ABOVE: Almost every nook and cranny on the edge of the river is a blaze of colour in the summer months.

below the camp. It proved to be the most productive session of the weekend, during which we caught and released a number of beautifully marked browns on small, weighted flies bounced along the bottom.

The best was a lovely fish of 14 inches out of a skinny pocket of water. He fell for one of my favourite patterns, a sunken beetle. The line hesitated momentarily and I tightened instinctively, feeling the



ABOVE LEFT: A typical brown trout from the Lotheni River. ABOVE: The author's son Warren and grandson Trent, both keen flyfishers, take a breather after a long morning on the river. LEFT: The choice of fly is important in flyfishing and depends on conditions and what the trout are feeding on. BELOW LEFT: The small sunken beetle imitation that enticed a solid 14-inch brown trout to accept the author's offerings.

immediate resistance and the familiar tug of life as the line scythed downstream. The rod bucked as the feisty little fish protested throughout the short fight, all the way into my hand – a beautiful plump brownie.

Most of the fish we caught were found in the slots at the head of pools where the water cascaded in – by holding there they probably could not see us easily through the turbulence. No doubt these were also good places for the trout, for their own protection against predators and to be first in line for any food drifting past.

With regular sorties by raucous giant kingfishers up and down the stream, it's no wonder the trout are inclined to be more than a little jittery when seeking out the best hiding spots. Target these and you are sure to

be rewarded sooner or later.

Eventually my hands were so cold that my fingers were numb, and tying on a fly was almost impossible. I recall reading a comment once that enduring fishing in these conditions 'separates the firefighters from the flamenco dancers'. I opted for the flamenco-dancer route – I was done and ready to pack it in, in favour of the cosy cottage and a warm drink.

Conditions had been far from perfect but, looking at it from the jaundiced eye of a flyfisher, the challenge of the wild browns in this lovely stream is clear. And a stay at Lotheni is worthy of a visit for anyone who enjoys the mountains, getting in tune with nature and being far from the city. ■

Map reference D7 see inside back cover

Footnotes

Getting There From Durban it's about 200km to Lotheni via Nottingham Road in the KZN Midlands. From Notties drive west for 65km, before turning north-west onto the well-signposted road to Lotheni Huttet Camp. The alternate route via Himeville and Underberg (the closest towns to Lotheni) is recommended during the rainy season when the road conditions via Nottingham Road can be poor, especially when negotiating it without four-wheel drive.

Accommodation The old Natal Parks Board-style camp is set on the side of a wide valley, overlooking the river with uninterrupted views of the Berg. The self-catering cottages are comfortable and the staff helpful and friendly.

Activities Apart from enjoying the diverse and interesting fauna and flora, there are many hikes, mountain-biking trails and other attractions at Lotheni, including a small Settler Museum.
www.kznwildlife.com



Nissan's Little Cash Cow

Having won over the masses with the first Qashqai, Nissan's new and improved crossover SUV proves that beauty is more than skin deep

WORDS STEPHEN SMITH PICTURES STEPHEN SMITH AND SUPPLIED

Seven years ago, Nissan invented the crossover segment (although other manufacturers also voice this claim on occasion) with the first Nissan Qashqai. Despite the odd, hard-to-pronounce name and the fairly nebulous appearance, it took off in a big way, with more than 20 000 South Africans deciding that they hankered after the country lifestyle that a crossover promised them.

Designing a winning crossover SUV is a relatively simple affair, on paper at least. To win over the masses, the vehicle needs to look like an SUV (all rugged and sporty), but drive like a car and have similar running costs. Nissan followed this recipe closely with the original Qashqai, and the result was a remarkably popular and successful compact crossover that herds of people (two million and counting) have bought all around the world, including those enthusiastic locals. The peculiarly named vehicle was pleasant looking without any major design features, but the SUV appeal hit the correct note. The second-generation Qashqai builds significantly on the now-established model, as it's bigger, more refined, more economical, better looking, and superior in every way.



TOP: Crossovers are aimed squarely at the pursuit of the country lifestyle.
ABOVE: The interior has been given as much attention as the exterior and is very car-like.

What most people will notice is the very different external appearance. Designed to be a smaller twin to the new Nissan X-Trail, the Qashqai is thoroughly modern, all swoops, curves and aggressive lines. Where the first-generation Qashqai sold well in spite of pedestrian styling, the second take will sell largely because of its stylish appearance.

The sharper lines hide the fact that the Qashqai is now more spacious, including the luggage department that has grown by about five per cent. Leg, shoulder and head room have also been improved, for all occupants, while the vehicle is actually lighter than its predecessor for better fuel economy.

While the new exterior will lure buyers into having a closer look, the redesigned interior will reveal that the beauty is far more than skin deep. Nissan has focused on a premium feel, with high-quality materials, an intelligent and functional but still stylish layout, and a full complement of standard features. A 5-inch HD display lies at the centre of the infotainment system, and other features like cruise control, air con and a multifunction steering wheel are all standard across the range. A nice option on all models, except for the entry-level one, is Around View Monitor, which gives a bird's-eye view of the entire car and immediate surroundings for easy parking or reversing.

To fill the gap under that curved bonnet Nissan has used a range of small, very efficient turbocharged engines, both petrol and diesel. Entry-level models come with a 1,2T petrol engine that punches well above its weight and produces 85kW and 190Nm of torque, using just 6,2 litres of fuel every 100km. Next in line is a 1,5-litre dCi diesel engine that produces 81kW and 260Nm with a claimed fuel consumption of 4,2l/100km, while the top-of-the-range model uses a 1,6-litre dCi diesel engine that is good for 96kW and 320Nm (4,9l/100km). All models have a six-speed manual gearbox, except for the automatic 1,6 dCi CVT model.

Nissan markets the Qashqai as an urban vehicle and as such it isn't designed to live up to its looks and head off-road. Only the halo model is equipped with all-wheel drive and even that is aimed more at slippery roads than no roads.

Crossover vehicles like the Qashqai are designed for families, so it's no surprise that Nissan invested heavily in making the Qashqai as safe as possible. The result is a full five-star Euro NCAP crash-test rating thanks to ABS braking, six airbags, dynamic stability control, traction control and hill-start assistance.

As a crossover and as a family car the Qashqai excels, definitely feeling far more like a car to drive than the SUV it appears to be. And now that we're all used to the name and the Qashqai has been made so much more handsome, there is no doubt that it'll continue



Despite its modern, svelte appearance, the Qashqai has a bigger boot.

FACT FILE:

NAME: Nissan Qashqai 1,6dCi Automatic
BODY TYPE: Compact SUV
ENGINE CAPACITY: 1,6-litre turbodiesel
POWER OUTPUT: 96kW
TORQUE: 320Nm
PRICE: R382 500

to appeal to the local market. It should be a sensible buy, with Nissan reliability and very good resale value.

The Qashqai range starts at R282 000 and goes up to R410 000, including a 6-year/150 000km warranty and a 5-year/90 000km service plan. ■

WHEEL SPIN

Honda's little MPV

If you still believe that the best way to move seven people around is in an MPV, have a look at Honda's latest addition to their range. The Mobilio is a compact MPV set to do battle with the Suzuki Ertiga and the Toyota Avanza, offering plenty of space at an affordable price tag. Three rows of seats are the major selling point, while the engine is a 1,5-litre petrol unit available with a five-speed manual gearbox. A CVT version will be available soon. Prices start at R184 400.



High-riding Volvo Sedan

Not content with their range of off-road SUVs and estates, Volvo has given the S60 a lift and created the S60 Cross Country. The all-wheel-drive sedan has been raised by 65mm and given high-profile 18- and 19-inch tyres, and is the first crossover sedan that we can think of. Petrol and diesel models will be available, but at the moment it seems as though Volvo South Africa won't be bringing the S60 Cross Country to our shores. More's the pity.



Books

New publications about our magnificent country and its inspiring people

Pilot in the Wild

John Bassi has a well-informed view on the bush – with more than 16 000 hours of flying over it, he's been able to see the bigger picture, quite literally. Born in Zimbabwe, it's here that his book begins when, as a young trained Selous Scout he searches the bag of a dead terrorist to find ten rhino horns. "If I ever get out of this hellhole," he swears to his companion, "I'm going to dedicate the rest of my days to protecting wildlife." He's kept his word. The following chapters track his career as an aerial conservationist through a narrated series of his missions. At the end he mourns the shocking, ongoing loss of so many rhino and other creatures, as well as the fact that 'conservation is no longer at the heart of the wildlife industry.' His book shines a unique light into the bush – sharing his experiences directly with the reader.

Author: John Bassi **Publisher:** Jacana

Reviewer: Nancy Richards **Price:** R180

ISBN: 978-1-43140-871-9

Giveaway code: PILOT (2 copies)

Listening to Distant Thunder

The field of fine art is complex, but one does not have to have any profound knowledge of the subject to enjoy this wonderfully presented book on a great SA artist. In many ways Peter Clarke had a sad life – subjected to the fracturing of forced removals, he and his family had to leave Simon's Town and live in Ocean View, a bleak coloured township. But the man must have had an unquenchable spirit and a delight in life. Some works depict with shocking clarity the small tragedies of everyday life for non-whites, while others vibrate with joy. The authors provide enlightening commentary on the artist but for some personal perspective I spoke to my brother, who met Clarke because Ocean View is part of his constituency. "I see him as the quintessential Cape

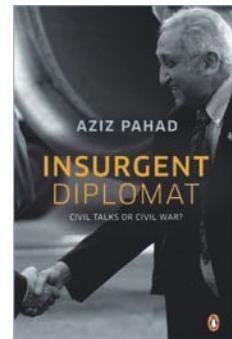
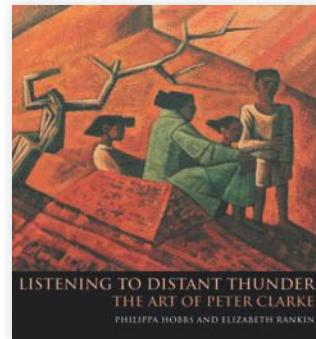
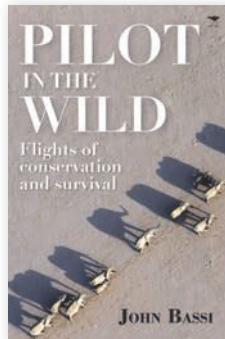
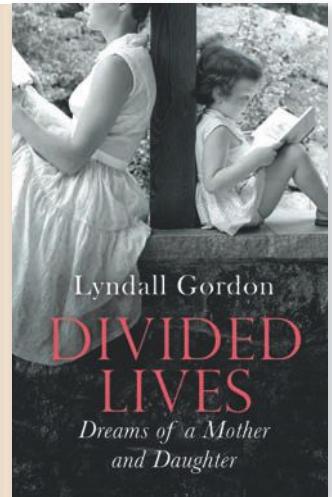
BOOK OF THE MONTH

Divided Lives

Profound and frank, *Divided Lives* is renowned literary biographer Lyndall Gordon's memoir, beginning in 1945 when she was four years old. As close companion to her mother, the mysteriously ill Rhoda, Lyndall is influenced by her great passion for literature and becomes a research fellow at St Hilda's College, Oxford. But this is just one of the journeys in a life shaped by a mother's strong expectations, and major social changes in the second half of the 20th century. The complex narrative weaves through Lyndall's recollections of and insights into post-war Cape Town, the dawning of Israel as a nation, the political upheaval in SA in the 1960s, the women's liberation movement and, on a more personal level, the turmoil of post-natal depression that, in the 1960s, seemed little understood.

Author: Lyndall Gordon **Reviewer:** Andrea Abbott **Publisher:** Virago Press **Price:** R280

ISBN: 978-1-84408-890-4 **Giveaway code:** DIVIDED (2 copies)



artist; a man who painted the people and was of the people. He was so humble. He could have lived anywhere in the world, but he chose to stay in Ocean View."

Author: Philippa Hobbs & Elizabeth

Rankin **Publisher:** Jacana Press

Reviewer: Nan Bowley-Smith

ISBN: 978-1-77584-161-6 **Price:** R390

Giveaway code: THUNDER (2 copies)

Insurgent Diplomat

More than 20 years since our political transition and accounts of what happened are still coming in, some overburdened by ideology, self-importance and self-justification but nevertheless enlightening

in their own way. Now Aziz Pahad, nice enough person but not a particularly inspiring politician, has come up with an autobiography that's remarkably readable. While the former deputy minister of Foreign Affairs was never a leading light of the struggle, he was a committed communist, trusted by colleagues. His inside knowledge, and candour and down-to-earth style in telling of the successes, disagreements and failures of the resistance movement, make this a worthwhile addition to the SA story.

Author: Aziz Pahad **Publisher:** Penguin Books

Reviewer: Leon Marshall

ISBN: 978-0-14353-885-1 **Price:** R240

Giveaway code: AZIZ (2 copies)

GIVEAWAYS

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Author Interview

'Wildlife warrior' Gareth Patterson's most recent book documents his incredible life with lions, how he became the 'hunted', and his recovery after a breakdown

WORDS IAN MCLEOD PICTURES SUPPLIED

With his lean, bronze torso and mane of sun-bleached hair, it is hard to pick out Gareth Patterson in old photographs of him hugging and training lions. Indeed, there were long spells when this free-spirited soul spent far more time with his feline family than he did with other people. In one case, Gareth explains, "I was essentially a human member of the pride."

It was 1989 when ivory poachers gunned down 83-year-old George Adamson, whose life with lions was depicted in the Academy Award-winning *Born Free*. This rendered three of his animals – the last of the Adamson lions – effectively orphaned for a second time. An old friend of George's, Gareth stepped in and moved the trio from Kora National Park in Kenya to the Tuli bushlands in Botswana. There began the arduous, complex process of raising captive lions for release into the African bush.

Gareth's philosophy on conservation must have been well formed by then, although he now refuses that label for himself. "That's a very Eurocentric approach to wildlife," he says. "It is founded on the idea that 'if it pays, it stays'. That's a commoditisation of animals, which is why in Europe they have to recreate their wilds – there's nothing left. My approach is based on respect and reverence."

For Gareth, the keystone is to personalise an animal. That is why he

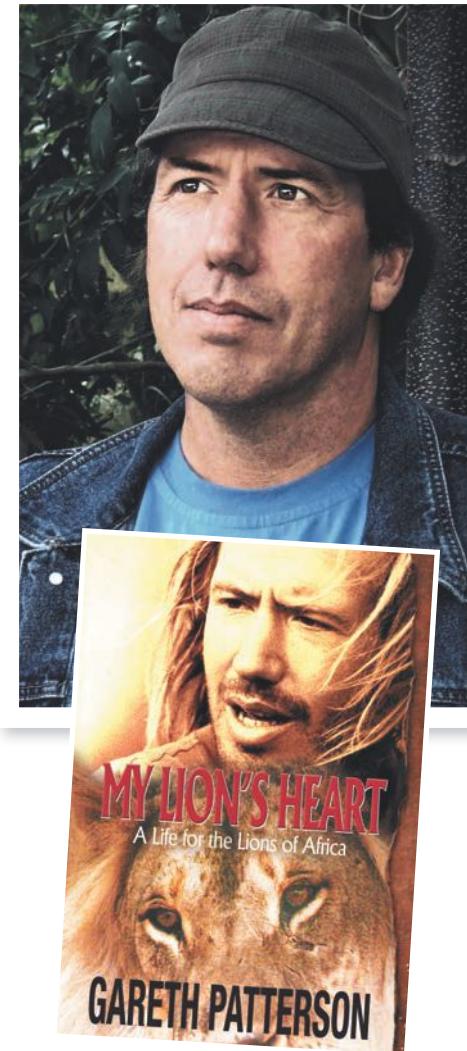
is such an advocate of studying animal behaviour, a branch of science he finds lacking these days. "When you study animals like this, you spend so much time with individuals that you can only empathise. And that's how the pioneers of the 1960s and 70s were so influential; that's how they brought the animal into the household of the reader or viewer."

Personalising the fight for lions is something Gareth did very nearly to his own demise. In the late 1990s he exposed the presence of a sordid industry of canned lion hunting in South Africa.

"But it was more than that," he goes on. "This was enslavement from womb to tomb: lion cubs being used for petting and later sent out on walks with tourists, then made use of for breeding and finally shot in a fenced area – and all legally."

The resulting exposé on British television in *The Cook Report* and later in South Africa caused widespread outrage. The public hadn't known the extent of the practice. But it also made Gareth a hunting target in his own right. "Those were torrid times," he recalls. "I received death threats and there was legal intimidation. If it wasn't answering the phone to the sound of a gun being cocked it was a hefty legal suit to keep me quiet."

It may have been an over-personalisation of his responsibility that nearly killed Gareth. In 2005, while living in Knysna, Patterson suffered a massive emotional and physical breakdown. He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and given just a few months to live because



his vital organs were failing. He recalls feeling "the life of every lion in Africa rested on my shoulders".

Gareth attributes his recovery to "my lion's heart", also the title of his most recent book. After nine prior books, this one was penned with a new readership in mind. As the last of a generation of 'wildlife warriors', Gareth saw this as an all-encompassing tale of his life with lions, aimed at inspiring the next wild-haired, bare-chested legion to take up the fight for his totem animal, the African lion. ■

**My Lion's Heart (R265) is published by Tracey McDonald Publishers
www.traceymcdonaldpublishers.com, ISBN 978-0-62060-133-7**

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Song of the Weavers

A great success story lies in a little Swazi business that has given contemporary designs to the ancient skill of basket weaving

WORDS AND PICTURES SUE ADAMS

It all started with the vision of Jenny Thorne, a Swaziland farmer's wife. Jenny always loved to chat to the Swazi women and hear their life stories. Also, in Swazi culture women have very little control over their own lives and, in fact, until 2006 were considered minors under Swazi law. Jenny wanted to help them generate their own income and, in 1992, began selling their crafts at a small roadside stall in the farming area of the Malkerns in Swaziland.

It became so popular she started a business called Gone Rural, which makes beautiful handwoven baskets, bowls,

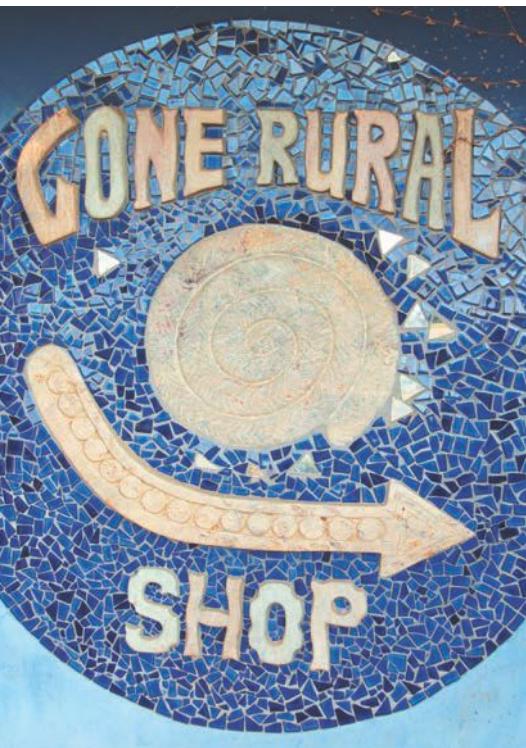
decor items and placemats. It has become an African success story of note. From employing 30 women it now provides an income to 740 rural women and supplies more than 1 000 retail outlets in 32 countries worldwide.

As I wander around the Gone Rural workshops, the mix of ancient and modern is striking. Vats of imported German dye boil on open fires, dyed grass lies spread out on open-air drying racks while a thousand baskets are being packed for a huge South African retailer, to be sold filled with nuts and fruit. One of the directors in high heels greets a group of women from Mahlanya who have arrived with newly woven baskets

on their heads to deliver their orders.

There's an excellent system at Gone Rural, one that sees lutinzi grass harvested in the highlands by the rural women and bought in to collection points. Gone Rural head office buys this untreated grass, which animals don't eat, and which is carefully harvested to keep the roots intact. It also absorbs dye very well and is particularly good for braiding, rolling and making finely woven products. At the collection point Gone Rural hands over dyed lutinzi grass at the same time, giving the women new orders with designs to be completed. Standards are high and the women are trained in specific designs. When the

LEFT: Even the signs on the buildings are artistically designed. BELOW: Lutinzi grass is laid out to dry in the sun.



orders are finished, Gone Rural returns to the rural meeting points to buy back the finished products.

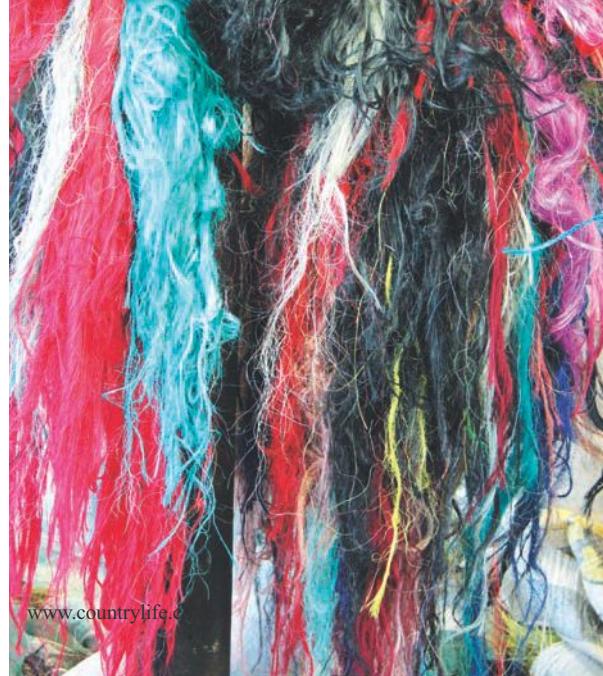
The products themselves are world class. Philippa Thorne, who is married to Sholto, one of Jenny's sons, studied at a design school in the United Kingdom and is the creative director who has helped to move the traditional weaves into a contemporary context. Beautiful coloured dyes and additions such as sisal and fabric add another dimension to the traditionally woven products. Now the Gone Rural products are highly sought after in cities

such as London, Tokyo and New York, and can be found in stores such as Selfridges and The Conran Shop, and the Smithsonian.

The baskets come in a variety of shapes and certainly have a practical use but also make great decor items. "We also collaborate with designers and companies to produce special products," Philippa tells me. "For instance an Italian designer loved the style of weaving but wanted to use his own fabric to make special pieces. Nandos also worked with us to design a condiment basket where a separate small business makes the frame and we do the weaving."

Philippa explains that Gone Rural also makes baskets out of rubbish. "We use old plastic bottles, sweet wrappers, supermarket bags and textile industry offcuts to add design, colour and texture to the woven products." Talk about some seriously chic upstyling.

Julie Nixon, who loved Jenny Thorne's philosophy of helping the Swazi women regain their status in society, started with Gone Rural nine years ago and is now the managing director. When she first arrived in Swaziland she couldn't believe that she had to get permission from her husband



ABOVE: Phinda Methula takes her dyed grass home to weave. RIGHT: Managing director of Gone Rural, Julie Nixon, and the company's creative director Philippa Thorne. BELOW RIGHT: Bonakele Ngwenya designed this basket to tell the story of the ups and downs in her life.

LEFT: Vibrant colours make the Gone Rural products stand out.





ABOVE: The Gone Rural women are justifiably proud of their products.
RIGHT: This basket uses bone to illustrate that women are the backbone of the family.
LEFT: Each basket is labelled by Babekile Lukhele before being packed. BELOW LEFT:
The workshop at Gone Rural in the Malkerns is a treasure trove.
BELOW RIGHT: Baskets lie stacked ready to be sent across the world.





ABOVE: Volunteers come from across the world to work at Gone Rural. **LEFT:** Founder of Gone Rural Jenny Thorne. **RIGHT:** Shelley Belohrad, director of boMake Gone Rural is passionate about the Swazi women and the products they make.



to join the library. "That's when I fully realised what a battle the Swazi women have," she says. Laws have changed since then but attitudes take much longer. "We try to help our women to put themselves in charge by helping them to become financially independent."

Shelley Belohrad was born in Swaziland, trained in finance in France and returned to work at Gone Rural. Her first experience with the company convinced her that she was in the right place. "I arrived at one of the collection points to find a group of women in a huge field sitting under a tree chanting and singing. There was one old man who described himself as the 'concierge'. He told me he was proud to be associated with Gone Rural as his wife could now afford to buy washing powder and softener and his clothes now smelled good."

For Shelley and the other people who work at Gone Rural these are the stories that make their work worthwhile. Gone Rural also established Gone Rural

boMake (*boMake* means 'women' in Swazi), a non-profit organisation to assist the rural women with education, health and social needs. It helps with school fees and providing clean water and health clinics, and trains women in basic financial skills.

Julie estimates that this project probably affects 20 000 people. "It has given dignity and status to so many Swazi women and has allowed them to manage their own lives without being at the beck and call of others."

But this is not a project of handouts –

the women can make their own decisions, choose how much they want to be involved and decide how to spend their own money. With Aids and poverty such huge issues in this tiny kingdom of Swaziland, Gone Rural and Gone Rural boMake are making an impact on the futures of many. ■

Map reference C8 see inside back cover

Gone Rural

+268 2550 4936

contactus@gonerural.co.sz

www.goneruralswazi.com

Gone Rural boMake

- It has helped provide clean water to 8 000 people.
- It educates 300 children each year.
- About 4 500 people attend the mobile health clinics each year.
- A total of 2 400 women are part of the Micro Savings Scheme where they

are encouraged to save, start other small enterprises such as raising chickens and selling second-hand clothes so that they do not depend entirely on Gone Rural.

■ At Gone Rural, 92 per cent of the women know their HIV status compared to the 38 per cent of Swazi people nationally.

Welcome to the Chocolate Factory

There's one exception to that rule about life's temptations being illegal, immoral or making you fat – dark chocolate

WORDS MARIANNE HERON PICTURES DAVID MORGAN



Alan Clegg, designer of chocolates with ingredients such as sugared rose petals, lavender, buchu and tonka beans. BELOW: Chocolate dinosaurs and other beasts are Alexander Avery alternatives to traditional Easter eggs.

Real chocolate, that top-quality dark stuff, has so much going for it – the feel-good effect, the antioxidants, all those uses in recipes, and it's supposed to be an aphrodisiac. The cherry has been the recent discovery by local entrepreneurs that chocolatiering is a great artisan business that also allows the dream of living in the countryside.

One woman who has her finger on the fledgling artisan chocolate business here is Di Burger, self-confessed chocaholic and author of *Chocolate's African Odyssey – Celebrating Chocolate in South Africa*. Finding in chocolate the perfect subject to follow her previous book on bubbly (aka Cap Classique), she was surprised when her research revealed more than 40 artisan companies working with chocolate, among them more than a score of chocolatiers and chocolate makers. (Chocolatiers buy couverture – or base chocolate – with which to create their chocolates, whereas bean-to-bar makers process beans to produce their own couverture to make chocolates.)

"It really started at the same time as the Slow Food Movement," says Di. "But people haven't been educated about artisanal chocolates handmade from the finest ingredients in small quantities." Compared to mass-produced chocolate, with its high amount of added sugar, fat and milk (all the things that really do make you fat), artisan chocolates are expensive.

"As South Africans we grew up with mass-produced chocolates; things like Smarties are fun but they're sweets rather than chocolates," says Di, who believes that premium chocolate appreciation can be just as complex and rewarding as wine appreciation.

ALEXANDER AVERY FINE CHOCOLATES

"There are four things I can't do without," says Alan Clegg.

"My polycarbonate moulds, my thermometer, my hairdryer and my cotton buds." Not the kind of remark you expect from a financier but then Alan Clegg is also a chocolatier.

A job in merchant banking brought Alan and his wife

Kam from England to South Africa. When the job ended the couple stayed on in South Africa, in Constantia, Cape Town, and Kam went off to work while Alan stayed home with the couple's sons Ellery (8) and Austin (4). "I was happy looking after the children and playing with Lego but I liked the idea of starting my own business."

Ellery and Austin became the inspiration for that business. Alan couldn't find any really good Easter eggs for the boys and combined the idea of making Easter treats with supplying a gap in the market here for high-end, modern chocolates.

Now, there are chocolates and chocolates. The Alexander Avery brand is couture chocolates, the Dior or Yves St Laurent creations of the sweet world, handmade in the garden cottage of the Clegg's home. There are golden chocolates, chocolates with delicate gold chinoiserie designs, rose and gold marbling in glossy chocolate, chocolates spotted with jewel colours looking almost too beautiful to eat... until you try one.

The fillings are equally original: ganache with juniper and gin, buchu fondant, rooibos tea and rose petals. (And I can't tell you how the ethereal flower patterns on Alan's exquisite packaging are achieved because it is a secret). Rather than Easter bunnies there are chocolate dinosaurs and beasts designed to delight any small person, as well as intriguingly patterned and coloured Easter eggs.

The couverture (or base chocolate) Alan uses is Valrhona Grand Cru de Terroir, a single varietal (sounds like wine doesn't it?) from Ghana and Madagascar. His thermometer is essential for tempering the chocolate at just the right temperature, the polycarbonate moulds for giving the chocolates that extra glossy look, and the hairdryer and cotton buds for finishing them off. His is a niche market primarily supplying bespoke chocolates for special occasions, and also select restaurants and hotels. There isn't much time for Lego now. "I just made 4 000 chocolates last week," says Alan, who has culinary genes – both his father and his brother are chefs.

MONIKI CHOCOLATES

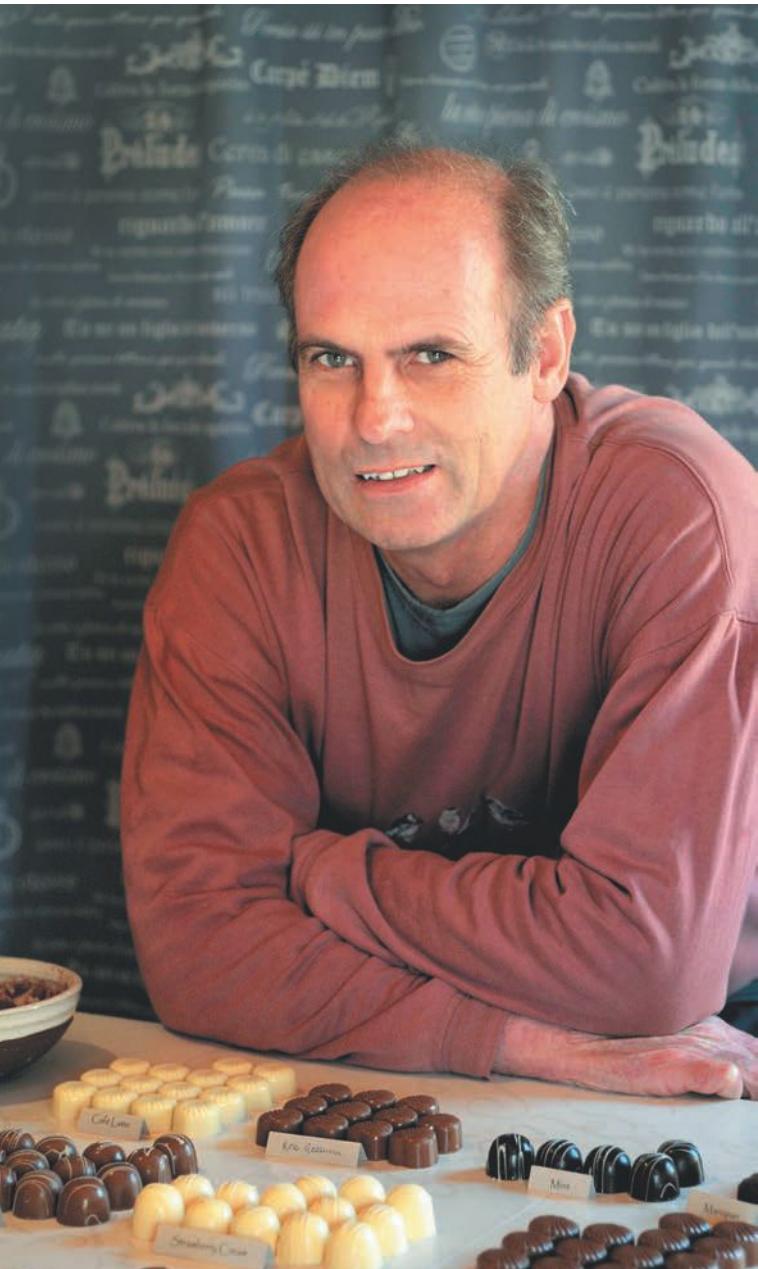
Niki de Wolf and Rijk von Kooij, originally from Rotterdam, Holland, really have made their dream of life in the South African countryside come true. They had fallen in love with Tulbagh when they held their wedding there 14 years ago and, on their return for a holiday with their two small children Aisha and Kenan, they bought historic Schoonderzicht Farm that dates back to 1795.

Niki, a journalist and food writer, hoped to get involved in tourism. "We thought of having a guest house but it wouldn't have worked with two small children. Then I noticed that there



ABOVE: Niki de Wolf with a collection of her Moniki chocolates at her home in Schoonderzicht, Tulbagh. RIGHT: A collection of Moniki Belgian-style chocolates.





ABOVE: Master chocolatier and self-confessed chocaholic Richard von Geusau. LEFT: Richard's prize-winning chocolate rose.



were no luxury chocolates here, something I missed.” And so, after extensive research and visits to the celebrated firm of Callebaut in Belgium, home of the finest chocolates, Moniki chocolates was started.

Niki began experimenting with chocolate making in a small kitchen on the farm. “I wanted an absolutely natural product, working with 70 per cent cocoa solids and without loads of sugar.” Initially a tasting experience for visitors, featuring sumptuous ganache-filled Belgian chocolate with coffee, it now includes wine, brandy or sherry pairings with chocolate at Tulbagh Winery’s Paddagang premises on Tulbagh’s Church Street. “The business just exploded as people got to hear about it,” says Niki.

Her wine and chocolate pairings have a novel feature. “One of the things I do is use wine in the chocolate. Like Shiraz with three colours of pepper and Maldon salt, or the ‘strawberries and cream’, which combines rosé wine with white chocolate, or wooded Chardonnay with lavender. But chocolate, unlike wine, is best eaten immediately.” Moniki’s Chocolates are also supplied to hotels, B&Bs and functions. For Easter, Niki makes bunnies and eggs. “Eating them as a child is how I developed my craving for chocolate.”

VON GEUSAU CHOCOLATES

A slim book provided Richard Von Geusau with the inspiration for a new business when he moved from Cape Town to Greyton. Called *The Chocolate Companion*, its author, the founder of Rococo Chocolates, is Chantal Coady. “She was very helpful,” says Richard, “and said ‘come over to the UK and I’ll help you’. Perhaps she felt responsible, having written a book that was about to change my life, and so she took me to Belgium as well. She had a successful business in the UK and was ethical in her operations. She has just been awarded an OBE for her work in chocolate.”

Fourteen years later Richard’s chocolate business is flourishing. His shop at the Oak and Vigne Café in picturesque Greyton could be a set from the movie *Chocolat*, based on Joanne Harris’s book of the same name. He uses the finest Belgian couverture for his handmade chocolates and bars. On the counter beside the displays of luscious truffles and chocolates filled with combinations like Cointreau, orange peel and pecan is a bouquet of chocolate roses fashioned by Richard, which took first prize in the Greyton Rose Festival. Nearby is Richard’s alternative to the Easter Bunny, a chocolate meerkat bar about to be launched on the market. “Rabbits aren’t indigenous and tourists want to buy something typically South African.”

Richard, a self-confessed chocoholic, likes to eat chocolate every day. “But I keep it dark. Dark chocolate has had a lot of great press of late for its good properties. Cocoa is one of the superfoods. It’s an antioxidant and as soon as you add milk and sugar you spoil that.”

A lucky meeting between Richard and Kevin Arnold of Waterford Wine Estate led to what was then the innovative idea of chocolate and wine pairing. “It has gone from strength to

strength and is hugely popular. The whole idea of a pairing is that it adds a dimension to both the wine and the chocolate. Now we also pair with port and old brandies."

Von Geusau chocolate bars for pairings have intriguing flavours like fynbos, rooibos, rose geranium or cinnamon with orange and ginger, which make a superb companion to fine malt whisky. "We also send parcels of chocolates across the world, especially to the USA, where people have tasted my chocolate at Waterford." So maybe it's true that chocolate can be addictive – well, just a little bit.

HUGUENOT FINE CHOCOLATES

Chocolate is always a delicious surprise but for Denver Adonis and Danny Windvogel it involved one of a different kind. Denver was studying marketing and Danny was working for a finance company and they applied for bursaries (designed to foster entrepreneurship) offered by the Belgian NGO, Livos. They received them and leapt at the chance to spend time in Europe. "It was only after we were accepted that we discovered that the bursaries were to study chocolate making," says Denver. "It was a bit of a shock but we decided to go for it."

After an intensive week at Callebaut in Belgium, they were converts. "Before that the only kind of chocolate I knew came in slabs," admits Denver. Training in the industry, with evening classes at chocolate school, followed during their year-long training in Belgium. That was more than a decade ago. On their return, they set up shop in Franschhoek, seeing the opportunity to supply fine chocolates at a time when chocolatiers were extremely rare in South Africa. Initially just the two partners and a helper were involved.

Today Denver and Danny have 16 employees at Huguenot Fine Chocolates, and recently sent two of their team, Morné September and Leon Groenewald, to Belgium to study patisserie making. At their premises on Huguenot Street they offer 300 varieties of chocolate. "Not all at the same time," says Denver with a laugh.

In addition to gift boxes, individual chocolates and bespoke chocolates for special events, with original flavours like rooibos, beer and cinnamon milktart, they also offer 'The Chocolate Experience', a presentation on the history and background of cocoa and chocolate making. And, yes, it does involve tasting. ■

Alexander Avery Fine Chocolates 079 998 0266

info@alexanderavery.co.za

Moniki Chocolates 023 230 0673, info@schoonderzicht.com

Von Geusau Chocolates 028 254 9100, www.vgchocolate.co.za

Huguenot Fine Chocolates 021 876 4450

www.huguenotchocolates.com



Denver Adonis (left) and Danny Windvogel (right) at Huguenot Fine Chocolates in Franschhoek.

Chocolate Unwrapped

- In South America, chocolate was always revered as the food of the gods and was introduced to Spain by the conquistadores.
- Made from beans found in the gourds of the cacao tree, chocolate was initially consumed as a luxury drink that spread in popularity throughout Europe. By the mid-17th century chocolate houses had become fashionable in London.
- In England, abstentionist Quaker families like the Frys and the Cadburys (whose motto might well have been the acronym ABG or Anything But Gin), sought to provide alternative attractions to notorious gin palaces, and were prime movers in developing chocolate drinks and sweets.
- Joseph Fry's first chocolate bar, Fry's Chocolate Cream, was produced in 1847 and is still made to this day.
- New ways of producing and mixing chocolate helped Cadbury (founded 1824) add milk chocolate bars to its range of cocoa powders in 1905, paving the way for other favourites like Cadbury Milk Tray.
- Painted and decorated eggs have been part of Easter celebrations for centuries, and the new chocolate manufacturers were quick to capitalise on the tradition, starting to make chocolate Easter eggs early last century.
- How did the Easter Bunny get in on the act? Apparently the tradition comes from Germany where the Easter Bunny or Hare brought eggs to good children at Easter time.

Restaurants

SUE ADAMS tucks in at casual Lowveld eateries



Picasso's Mexican Taqueria, White River, 013 750 0300

The Lowveld is perfect for warm, open-air dining and the newly opened Picasso's Mexican Taqueria has got it all. We arrived parched after a hot dusty day exploring and what could be more perfect than frozen lime margaritas and strawberry daiquiris?

The wide, cool, shaded veranda has a view over bush and fields and I felt that if I squinted a little after another daiquiri I might just see the sea. After all, the idea for this restaurant was decided on by a bunch of South African friends visiting the Greek island of Naxos and getting hooked on Picasso's on the beach. The Golitz's and the Davis's from White River loved this beachside Mexican restaurant with a Spanish name owned by a Greek with a Canadian wife and decided there needed to be a South African connection. They persuaded the owner, Stratos, to get involved and come out to help them with the concept.

So Picasso's in White River opened in December 2014 and by the number of people returning again and, again, it's a hit.

This is not fine dining but casual, social eating so the waiter, Brett, recommended we order a number of plates for the table and just dip in. If you don't know what chimichangas (R39) are or you haven't tried jalapeño poppers (R45) this is the place to do it. Even my friend, chilli-fanatic Colin, found them hot enough. The enchiladas (R79) were spicy and delicious and the sizzling fajitas (R99) scrumptious.

My sons Chris and Ryan tucked into nachos and tacos, and clean plates and sleepy faces were proof enough that the food was both tasty and filling. (Although I'm not sure how much the sleepiness had to do with the frozen drinks). My daughter Shelley chose a Parma ham, rocket and Parmesan pizza (R89) and declared it the best ever.

Next time we go, and there will definitely be a next time, I want to try the Gorgonzola, onion marmalade and fresh rocket pizza (R75). Or maybe the Chilli Con Carne (R89). And the Frozen Lime Margarita is calling.

Sabie Brewing Company, Sabie, 013 764 1005

There is nothing quite like a long, cold beer sipped on a veranda with a view as the sun goes down after a hot day. Sabie is one of the areas where gold was discovered but there is a new kind of gold here – excellent handcrafted beer at the Sabie Brewing Company.

Six of us arrived on a steamy hot Lowveld day ready to taste the beer and the food on offer. We ordered the Beer Tasting Platter (R40) consisting of their six locally made beers, lovingly brewed by brewmaster, Shaun McCartney, who may be protective about his secret recipes but is very happy to show you his brewery and talk about beer. Six small glasses later and we were quite decided on what each of us liked.

The Sabie Brewing Company used to be the old Glynn trading store and the beers themselves tell the history of the area. For example, the Wheelbarrow Weiss beer is named after the first prospector Alec Patterson, who wheeled his barrow into the hills in this area, prospecting for gold. Chef John Grobbelaar recommends that Glynn's Gold is a beer particularly good when drunk with his famous hamburgers made with special South American spices. My Beef Burger with Avo and Spicy Sauce (R70) was certainly tasty.

Neil, my lager-loving friend, could not resist the combination of a Long Tom Lager with the Lamb Curry (R90) and says both slipped down really easily. Chef John tries to use the beers as much as possible in his cooking, but he is particularly proud of the grist bread made out of the by-products of beer making such as malt and wheat.

My Cheese Platter (R95) with cheese, pickles and grist bread was excellent and the Peri-Peri Chicken Liver Starter (R45) with grist bruschetta, which some of us shared, was excellent.

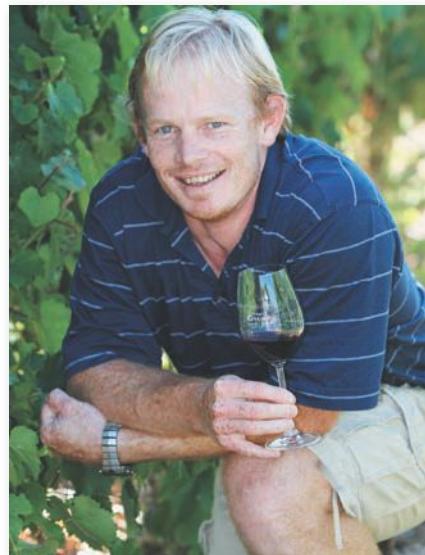
Sitting on the veranda of the Sabie Brewing Company sipping ice-cold beer accompanied by delicious food, I did not envy the prospectors and wheelbarrow pushers of 150 years ago one little bit. Sabie was the place to be right now. ■



WINEMAKER Boela Gerber of Groot Constantia

Boela was born in Cape Town in 1972. He's easy going and affable, with a sense of humour that has no doubt seen him through one or two tight spots. He originally enrolled at Stellenbosch to do a BSc and stumbled upon winemaking when he was "quickly persuaded" by one of his classmates – son of Wilhelm Linde, legendary winemaker at Nuy Winery – to switch to oenology, which was a "steep learning curve", but one he took to effortlessly. His biggest influence was André van Rensburg (Vergelegen), with whom he worked at Stellenzicht. He has had extensive overseas experience at Château Angélus at Saint-Émilion and "a few vintages in Bordeaux in the off-season, as well as in Tuscany, La Rioja and California," he says modestly. Boela is married to Michaela, a physiotherapist. They feel fortunate to live on the estate and love entertaining at home. He enjoys the outdoors, mountain biking in Tokai, surf skiing in Hout Bay, and the occasional holiday at his parents' cottage in Yzerfontein.

"I want to express a sense of place in all our wines, a taste of Groot Constantia's character"



There are many versions of the origin of the name Constantia, but the most credible is that the seriously acquisitive Simon van der Stel, the original owner of the whole Constantia Valley, named it after the daughter of the VOC official who expedited the transfer of the land. Today, Groot Constantia, after a sometimes turbulent history, has settled into a gracious and venerable old age. This is the 300-year old Granddaddy of Cape wine farms and a visit takes one back to a time when things were slower and we'd never heard of Twitter. Its wines were sought-after by emperors, aristocrats, writers like Jane Austen and even Napoleon on St Helena. After a period when the wines were not well considered, today the team is producing award-winners readily accessible to the thousands of visitors who flock to the estate annually.

Winemaker Boela Gerber, member of the prestigious Cape Winemakers Guild, keeps a tight rein, making wines worthy of their ancient heritage with plenty of fruit always apparent, supported by oak whenever necessary. "I want to express a sense of place in all our wines, a taste of Groot Constantia's character," he says. These wines have won more than 66 gold medals in the last decade, both here and internationally, which means he must be doing something right. ■

Sauvignon Blanc 2014

A touch of Semillon tempers this delicious wine that is packed with summer fruit flavours like white peaches adding to the richness on the palate. **R114**

Constantia Rood

Thirteen months in oak supports four red varietals led by Cabernet Sauvignon. This results in flavours of red cherries and plums, even a grape or two, eminently quaffable. A bargain at **R91**

Grande Constance 2012

The quintessential SA wine made from red and white Muscat grapes. Intense and fragrant with crisp acidity balancing the sweetness perfectly. A fabulous gift for someone special. **R423** (375ml bottle)



GROOT CONSTANTIA, CONSTANTIA, 021 794 5128



Art on a Plate

Botanical cuisine is the food scene's new kid on the block. At Restaurant Mosaic in Gauteng's Crocodile River Valley, masterchef and food artist supreme Chantel Dartnall is leading the charge

WORDS JULIA LLOYD PICTURES ELMARIE KNAPTON



LEFT: Petite powerhouse chef, Chantel Dartnall, master artist behind the culinary creations at Mosaic Restaurant in the Crocodile River Valley. ABOVE: The magnificent vertical gardens on the outside wall of Mosaic's kitchen are not just a pretty face, they keep the fridges inside cool. RIGHT: Outside Mosaic, tables are set around a koi pond and look out over the koppie to the bushveld below. BELOW: Up the steps to Chantel's edible garden of flowers and herbs.



There's an invigorating breeze in the Crocodile River Valley northwest of Johannesburg, in a giant spread of bushveld and koppies called the Francolin Conservancy. The road winds and turns through acacias and karees, in the grasslands of giraffe, antelope and more birds than you could possibly imagine.

It's also home to the much-vaunted boutique hotel called The Orient, built by Chantel's stepfather Cobus du Plessis. It's only later that I learn that the fantastic Moorish buildings rising out of the bush are *not* a luxury hotel with a fine-dining restaurant. They belong to a fabulous restaurant around which luxurious rooms have grown.

Okay, maybe it is over the top. But that's the experience here. Over the top. The kind in which every sense will have such a fine time wallowing, chances are none will get over it. So be prepared to be bowled over the moment you enter the giant wooden doors and take in

the sumptuous mix inside of North Africa, India and Turkey.

Take a deep breath on your way up the grand staircase to opulent Mosaic restaurant, and then dive back in time to La Belle Époque and the gorgeousness of Paris in the late 18th century, when restaurants were crammed late into the night with musicians, artists, writers and poets. And then look outside, down past the koppie to the undulating valley. And pinch yourself. You're in Africa.

But wait. Step just outside to the tables next to the koi pond and an immaculate vertical garden, and you have a hint of Japan. "That's why it's called Mosaic. It's a canvas of influences from so many countries," says Chantel Dartnall, Eat Out S Pellegrino Chef of the Year 2014, and a lady that's cooking up such a storm with her fine dining she's on everyone's hotlist right now.

But it's not surprising. Her food – or rather her botanical cuisine – is as much an eyeful as

CHANTEL DARTNALL ▶ COUNTRY CHEF



a mouthful, and a brilliantly healthy mouthful at that. Art on a plate. Food that conjures up visions of a chef in an artist's smock with a brush in one hand and a palette of purées and mousses and moulds in the other. Creating food that looks so beautiful it's almost criminal to eat it.

"First is the flavour, then comes the colour," says Chantel, as she describes how botanical cuisine and serving edible flowers has been the thing in Europe for quite some time. It's why she heads off there every year for a month. Two weeks spent buying wines and two weeks lapping up the food, the museums and the culture. "Europe, France in particular, has long-time been producing botanical cuisine and I go there for inspiration," she says. "Destination restaurants are huge there. Edible flowers are huge there. And the whole eating experience is different there. Even for the waiters and sommeliers theirs is a profession, a calling."

Supremely elegant but easy-going and



ABOVE LEFT: With a superb wine cellar of local and international labels, Mosaic takes its wine pairings seriously. There is also a Champagne Bar. ABOVE: An antique Moorish side plate adds to the exotic opulence of Mosaic. ABOVE RIGHT: The luxurious booths of Mosaic take you back to late 18th century Paris. LEFT: Chantel and her 'rocks' Agnes Ngware (left) and Agnes Ademosu.

relaxed, Chantel is a fascinating mix of order and flow. Much like this bush palace. I thought I'd find it odd to meet a fêted chef and woman of the world tucked away in this hidden valley. Quite the contrary. Apart from the fact that her culinary innovations are bringing the world in droves to her doorstep, Chantel Dartnall here in the Crocodile River Valley is the perfect fit.

"This is my family home. I've been here all my life, really," she tells me, as she whisks me around her edible garden. "We moved here when I was four and I remember scaling all these mountains. And the deliciousness of my first oxalis. When my stepbrothers were out riding on the farm I was always there in the kitchen with Gran. There has not been a moment in my life that I haven't been interested in food."

Of course all those years on what was then the family cattle farm, out in nature, also had a huge influence on Chantel. "I have such an appreciation for nature and bring it into my dishes. My style is botanical. You eat with your eyes and so sometimes I show a scene from nature, othertimes I depict an experience. A plate of food must tell a story. And you have to have emotion for what you're cooking."

In high school at Pro Arte Alphen Park

(South Africa's Juilliard), at a time when it combined the business and arts sides, Chantel ended up studying hotel management alongside drama, which makes great sense when you see her creations. She went on to the Pru Leith Chef's Academy and, after an internship in Europe, the next step was to open a restaurant. "But where? In Pretoria? Johannesburg? I need to be in nature and it just had to be here. So I came home."

In the herb garden she picks violas, fuchsias and dianthus. And a begonia. "Here. Eat this," she says, handing me the pretty yellow flower, as we head off down the lemon path to the pomegranate garden. "Delicious with fish and avo. And packed with antioxidants. All herbs and edible flowers aid digestion and are not there on a plate just as decorative aids. And the health of a dish is as important as the flavour. What my food makes guests feel like *after* their meal is so important. I've eaten out and it's taken me two days to digest the food."

In the gloriously cool wine cellar, built over and around natural rocks, there are 50 000 bottles from 1 300 local and international labels. "It's so important for all of us to be involved constantly in developing wine pairings and new dishes," says Chantel. "Every Tuesday we have our experimental day when we pack out all the

dishes and bring up the wines and my mom Mari (who is also Mosaic's maître d'), my stepdad and all the staff and I get into some serious tasting, cross referencing every ingredient to find out what works with what wine.

The menu only changes seasonally but if Chantel finds something really special from any of her local, handpicked suppliers, she'll always buy it and create a 'special' for the menu. "Oh, when I was in Italy in January you won't believe the truffles I found to bring back," she tells me, with no small amount of reverence in her voice. As part of her Chef of the Year prize (which she also won in 2006, three years after Mosaic opened) she was flown to Italy to take part in the Chef's Cup.

"There were 70 chefs from around the world who were brought together to cook and chat and swap ideas. At this one event I had to plate for 250 people so, beforehand, I started building the cold ingredients for my dish that told the story of treasures on a beach. Soon a crowd gathered and I could hear them saying, 'What *is* she doing?' It was quite a preparation that saw me taking 12 crates to the event, while the others had three."

"I eventually had someone come up to me and say, 'They all think you're crazy.' But I had people coming back for more and that's all I cared about. And, as they say, being insane is a prerequisite for being a chef." ■

Map reference B6 see inside back cover

Restaurant Mosaic at The Orient
012 371 2902/5, mari@the-orient.net
reservations@restaurantmosaic.com
www.restaurantmosaic.com



Tuna Sashimi with Wasabi Avocado and Oriental Dressing

Serves 6

- 450g sashimi-grade yellowfin tuna
- 1 tsp black sesame seeds
- fresh edible flowers, baby fennel leaves and micro herbs to garnish
- beetroot juice
- avocado diced and marinated in oriental dressing

Oriental Dressing

- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 100ml rice wine vinegar
- 100ml lemon olive oil
- 1 tsp grated lemon grass
- 50ml light soy sauce
- 1 tsp finely diced ginger

Wasabi Avocado

- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 avocado, peeled and stone removed
- juice of 1 lime
- ½ tsp wasabi paste
- 20g trout roe

METHOD For the oriental dressing, combine the ingredients in a bowl and leave for 20 minutes to infuse. Strain through a sieve over a small bowl and set aside.

To make the wasabi avocado, place sugar in a small saucepan with 2 tsb water and bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Allow to cool slightly, then transfer to a food processor, along with the avocado, lime juice and wasabi paste, and blend until smooth. Place the avocado paste in a bottle with a nozzle to make little droplets on the plate.

Trim the tuna and cut into thin slices. Drizzle over the dressing. Take one slice of tuna for each plate and dip it in the beetroot juice to colour it and then pat dry on kitchen paper before you arrange tuna slices on top of your plate, followed by the marinated avocado cubes dipped in black sesame seeds.



Vegetable Cookpot

Serves 4

- courgette purée
- fresh, sliced shiitake mushrooms
- fresh morels, thoroughly rinsed
- fresh pak choy
- green peas, blanched and popped
- green asparagus spears
- fava beans, blanched and popped
- a red and a yellow pepper, de-seeded and peeled and cut into triangles
- baby carrots, blanched
- tomato tea stock
- lemon-scented olive oil, to taste

- sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- baby rocket leaves
- baby basil leaves
- fresh edible flowers

Tomato Stock

- 8 large ripe Italian vine tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 100g brown sugar
- 20ml salt
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 big bunch of basil
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 2 rooibos teabags
- 3.5ℓ cold water

Courgette Purée

- 1kg courgettes, peeled and sliced (keep skins)
- 3 cloves garlic
- 50g butter
- 4 tbsp chopped parsley
- Maldon salt
- lemon olive oil
- fresh ground black pepper

METHOD For the tomato stock, place all the ingredients in a stock pot and slowly bring to the boil. Simmer the tomato tea gently for about 20 minutes, and then strain the tea through a chinoise lined with fine muslin cloth. Reserve enough stock for the cookpots and use the rest to serve as tea with the dish.

For the courgette purée, bring a pot of salted water to the boil. Blanch the courgette peels in boiling water and then refresh immediately in ice water. Drain well and purée in a food processor. In a heavy-bottom pan melt the butter, add the garlic and sauté the sliced courgettes for 10 min. Then purée in a food processor. Transfer the purée into a saucepan then add the green courgette skin purée into the white purée for a bright green colour. If your purée is too watery, cook it over a low heat and keep stirring until it becomes thicker. Add a little lemon olive oil and salt and pepper to season.

To layer the cookpot, lay the sliced shiitake mushrooms on the bottom and cover with 1tbsp tomato stock. Pack a layer of green vegetables and morels on top. Season lightly and add two soup spoons of green-pea purée, then pack on to this a layer of baby carrots, red and yellow peppers. Place the asparagus spears right on top and drizzle with some lemon olive oil. Place the lid on the pot and bake in the oven at 175°C for 15 minutes. Take cookpot out of oven, garnish with baby rocket leaves, fresh edible flowers and baby basil. Serve immediately.

Wine suggestion Lismore Sauvignon Blanc 2011





Pear and Cranberry Loaf

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp chopped rosemary
- 1 large egg
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- pinch vanilla powder
(or 1 tsp vanilla extract)
- 1 tsp grated lemon zest
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup grated, peeled ripe pears
- ½ cups chopped dried pears
- ¾ cup dried cranberries

METHOD

Grease a flat baking tray. In a small bowl, mix together the flour, sugar, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, rosemary and nutmeg, and set aside. In a large bowl, whisk together egg, oil, vanilla, lemon zest, lemon juice and pears. Add the flour mixture to the wet mixture and fold ingredients together; just before they're fully combined, add the cranberries and gently fold until all the dry ingredients are moistened. Shape your dough into a long loaf and bake in the oven at 180°C until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean, about 50-55 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a rack for 5-10 minutes before removing to cool completely on a rack. Delicious with a cheeseboard.

Wine suggestion Soetkaroo Cape Ruby Touriga Nacional 2010
and Niepoort 10 Year Tawny Port



Lavender Macaroons

- 100g ground almonds
- 140g icing sugar
- 45g sugar
- 1 pinch finely ground salt
- 80g egg whites (from 2 large eggs at room temperature)
- purple gel food colouring
- dried lavender petals

Lavender Chocolate Ganache

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped dark chocolate
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cream
- 2 tsp dried lavender petals

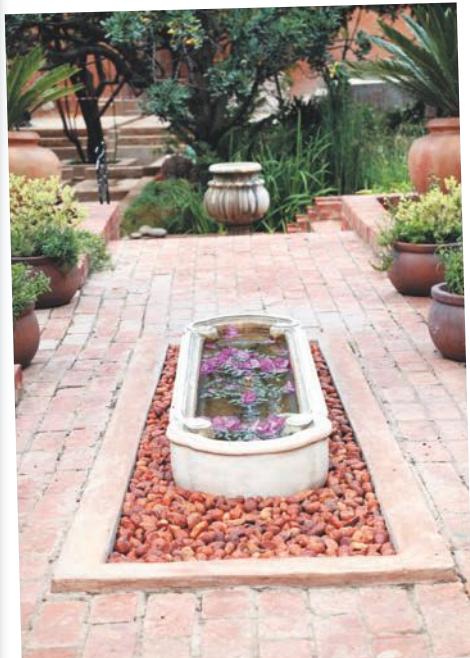
METHOD Preheat oven to 120°C. In a large bowl, sift together the almond flour, powdered sugar and salt. In another bowl separate the egg whites and with an electric mixer whip the egg whites on medium speed until they start to increase in volume. Sprinkle in the sugar, one spoon at a time, while continuing to whisk. When all the sugar is incorporated, add the food colouring and whip the meringue on high speed until stiff peaks have formed.

Add the dry ingredients to the meringue and, with a spatula, gently fold the meringue into the dry ingredients.

Pipe the batter onto a baking sheet lined with baking paper. Let the macaroons sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes to dry. The tops

should not stick to your finger when you touch them. Bake one sheet at a time positioning it in a middle rack. Turn oven to 100°C. Bake for 11-15 minutes. When they are ready, the bottom should be dry and can be picked up easily. Let the macaroons cool then peel them off the baking paper.

For the ganache, place the chopped chocolate in a mixing bowl. Heat the cream gently with the dried lavender. Pour the lavender-infused cream through a strainer over the chopped chocolate. Mix until it forms a smooth consistency. Pour the mixture into a piping bag and let chill until the ganache is at the correct consistency to be piped into the macaroons.



Strawberry and Rhubarb with Vanilla Sorbet

Serves 4

Macerated Strawberries

- 1 punnet strawberries, halved or quartered
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 x vanilla pod cut lengthwise and seeds scraped out
- 5ml fresh lime juice
- 1 x tonka bean (optional)

Vanilla Yoghurt Sorbet

- 75g of sugar
- 75ml of water
- 1 gelatine leaf, soaked
- 600g of plain yoghurt
- zest of one fresh lime
- 100ml strawberry syrup (from the marinated Strawberries)

Cooked Rhubarb

- 4 rhubarb stalks
- 200g strawberries
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cups sugar
- 1 vanilla bean

METHOD For the macerated strawberries, stir together strawberries, sugar, vanilla and lime juice in a bowl. Let stand at room temperature until juices are released, for at least 30 minutes. With a nutmeg grater add some tonka beans to taste. Refrigerate until required.

For the yoghurt sorbet, first make a sugar syrup by boiling together the water and sugar in a pan until the liquid has the consistency of a syrup. Add the soaked gelatine leaf, then the yoghurt and mix in with the rest of the ingredients. Churn in an ice cream maker and store in the freezer until ready to serve.

To make the rhubarb, trim the rhubarb and cut into ribbons. Hull the strawberries and cut in half if large. Combine the rhubarb, strawberries, water, sugar and vanilla bean in a saucepan. Dissolve the sugar over a medium heat. Bring to a gentle boil and cook until the rhubarb is softened and the mixture thickens. Remove the vanilla bean and cool the mixture slightly. Serve with vanilla yoghurt sorbet and macerated strawberries with a drizzle of the vanilla tonka syrup.

Wine suggestion Glen Carlou Natural Sweet Chenin Blanc 2012 ■



For
the recipe of
Mosaic's signature dish
Birds of a feather visit
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Property Matters

DR ANDREW GOLDING of Pam Golding Properties says we are seeing a rise from the slump in the holiday homes market

When the property market began to freefall in late 2008, a consequence was that the holiday-homes market hit a slump. Now that the national property market has picked up and is experiencing sustained, increased activity, we're seeing signs of an uptake in the leisure market.

With the return of the leisure buyer, we have found that, for many of them, an important part of escaping city life is to relax and to blow off steam by pursuing outdoor activities. Apart from the usual pursuits such as hiking, water sports, horse riding and fishing, mountain biking has increased in popularity with all ages.

Towns and areas as widespread as Clarens, Dullstroom, the Vaal Dam and Parys, Robertson, Sedgefield, Plettenberg Bay, Rhodes and Underberg, to name a few, are some of the destinations where adventure seekers explore 'new' terrain. Paragliding, rock climbing, abseiling, quad biking, river rafting and even skydiving are other activities available in these towns, and draw those with a penchant for high-energy sports.

Buying a leisure property to spend weekend getaways and holidays is a natural progression, particularly if this translates into a sound investment for the future, or a country home for retirement. Potential purchasers may be pleasantly surprised at the excellent value for money on offer, including homes in the price band below R1 million.

In Robertson, in the picturesque Breede River Valley around 160km from Cape Town, residential properties range from cosy character cottages and Victorian-architecture houses to lifestyle farms. Entry-level cottages are priced from about R650 000 to R750 000, while a small family home can be bought for between R750 000 and R850 000. Even a large family home will not set you back more than R1 million to R2.5 million.

Plettenberg Bay has a lot to offer both residents and visitors. In addition to the 15km of beaches from Keurboomstrand to the Robberg Peninsula, the river, lagoon and bay are popular among fishing, boating and water-sport enthusiasts. And then there's some of the best shore-based whale watching in the country. Plett is also home to wildlife sanctuaries, game reserves and other

Travel costs, as well as the time constraints of today's busy lifestyles, are contributing to the demand for holiday homes within quick and easy reach

recreational activities such as mountain biking and abseiling.

Holiday homes in the vicinity of the Vaal Dam, including Denneysville, are among those receiving renewed interest from leisure buyers. Travel costs, as well as the time constraints of today's busy lifestyles, are contributing to the demand for

holiday homes within quick and easy reach to be enjoyed throughout the year.

The Vaal Dam's appeal lies in clean water and a shoreline of more than 900km, making for plenty of space for boating and relaxation in scenic surroundings, even in peak season. Current buyers are mainly from Johannesburg's Northern Suburbs, as well as the East Rand's Boksburg and Benoni.

The tranquil Garden Route town of Sedgefield, perhaps somewhat contrary to the implied perception created through its 'Cittaslow' (Slow Town) status, has

been discovered by holidaymakers and the younger set as a beautiful location with all the activities they seek. Besides the wide variety of beach sports, there's mountain biking, horse riding, paragliding and canoeing on the Swartvlei Estuary, which runs through the middle of the town to the river mouth.

Urban dwellers heading for the hills and high altitude retreats may look to the clean mountain air of the north-eastern town of Rhodes, near Tiffindell, with its snow skiing in winter. For outdoor lovers, the village of Rhodes offers a special getaway destination, with homes selling at accessible prices from R600 000 to R1 million.

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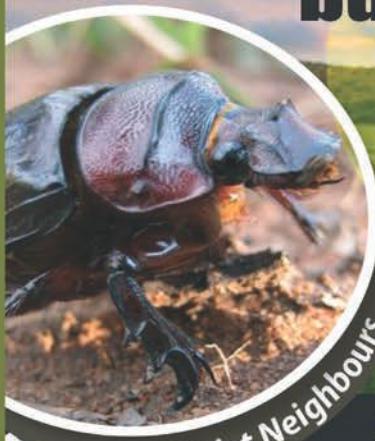
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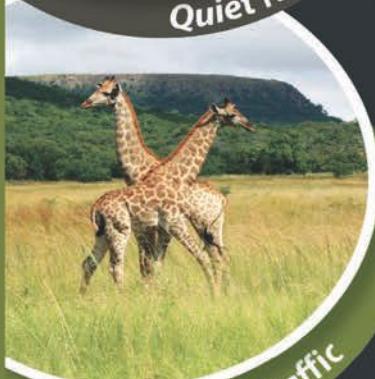


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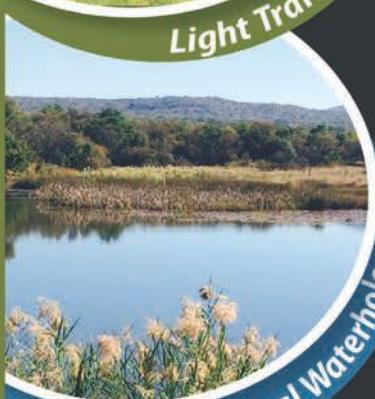
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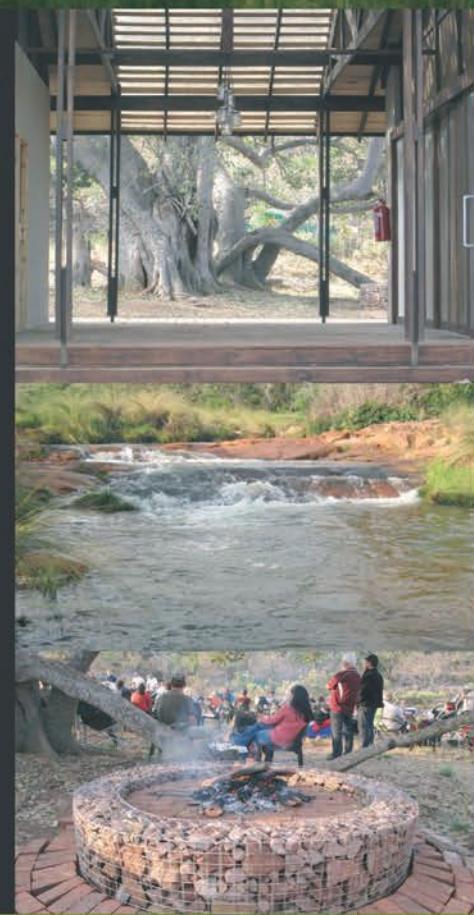
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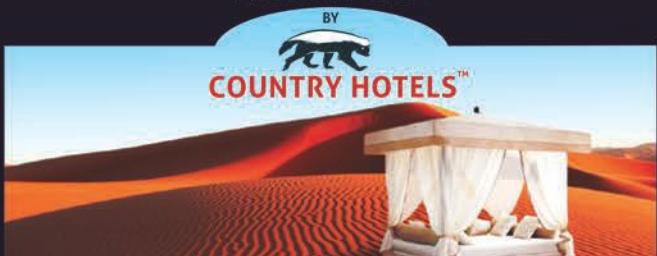


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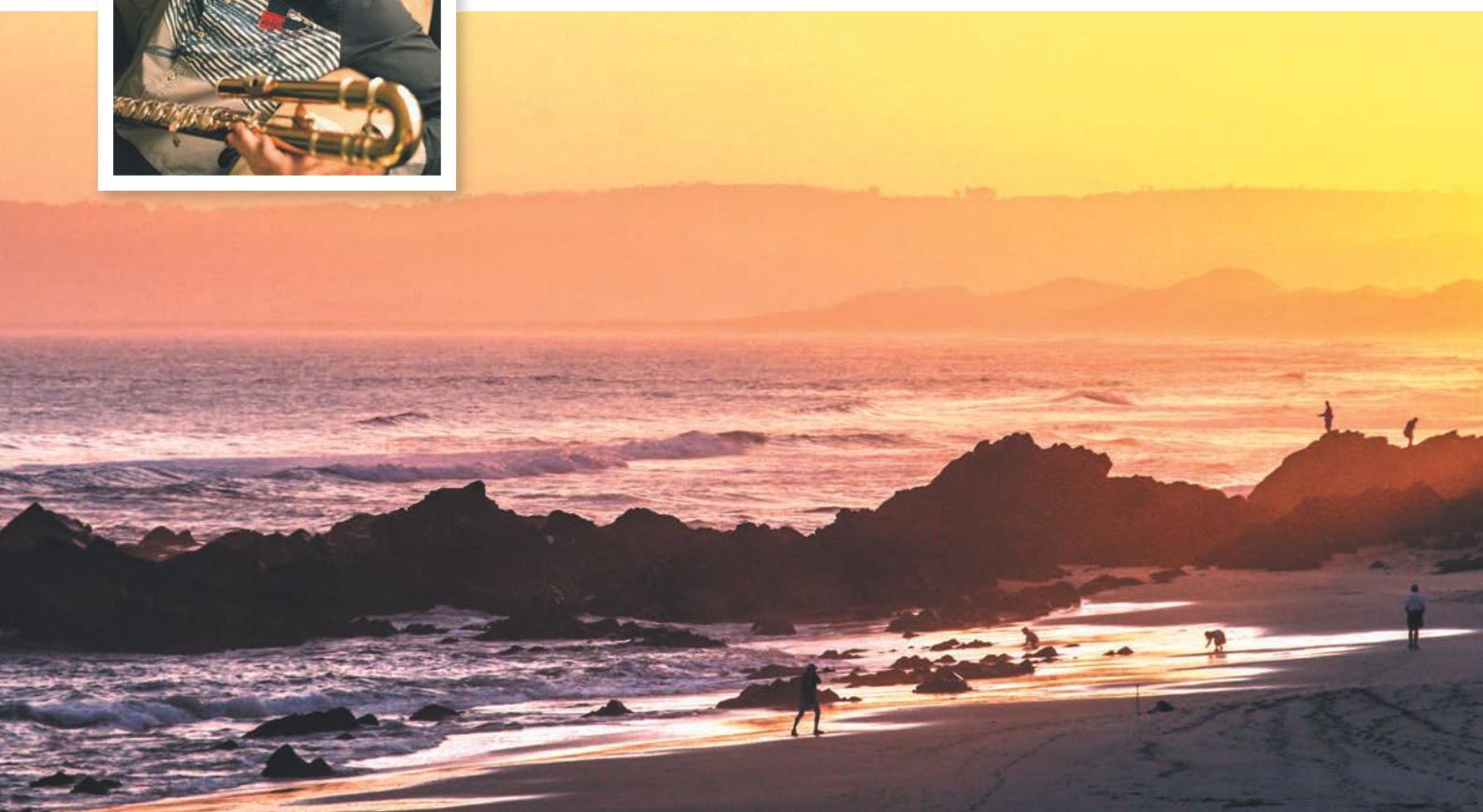


Parting Shot



South Africa's Grammy-winning flautist Wouter Kellerman may cross the globe playing his distinctive New Age music, but holidays on the Garden Route are his best escape

PICTURES CHRIS MARAIS AND SUPPLIED



My favourite holiday memories come from a few little spots on the Garden Route. As a young kid, I would go to Little Brak with my parents, brother and two sisters. We always rented the same house, which my father's colleague owned, and had a routine that rarely changed. We all loved board games, so that was our main entertainment every night. I recall playing cards, bridge and Pictionary until the small hours of the morning. That meant we would wake up late for brunch before hitting the beach in the afternoon. My brother and I loved body surfing for hours and we'd stay out there until it started getting dark.

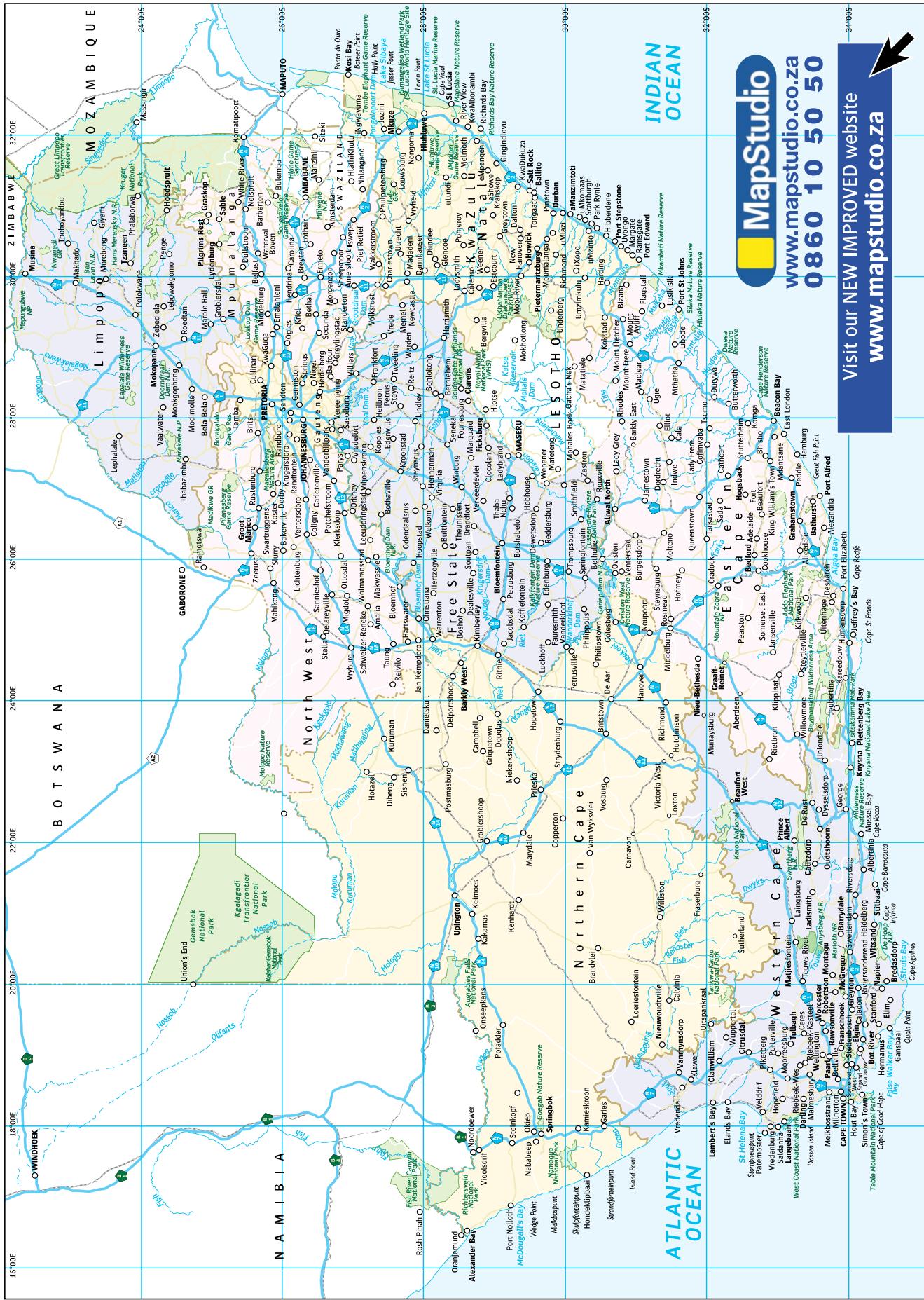
I've played the flute every day for more than 40 years, so I found time for that too. But I only played classical music back then, and didn't think of myself as a composer or someone who could play original music – that happened years later. The only other music we had was by Abba. There was this beautiful old record player and we had just one album; it seemed to be playing day and night. I ended up loving Abba, especially the song *He is Your Brother*.

Wilderness was another spot I enjoyed as a student, but now that our family vacations have been revived they're normally at Keurboomstrand just outside Plettenberg Bay. Funnily enough, we've stuck to many of the same old activities

from my childhood. My son and daughter have joined in the tradition. My sisters have a good laugh at me and my brother when we revive our body surfing sessions.

We've also invited all our friends and family to come down at once. The families each rent a place of their own and mostly do their own thing. Our big gathering is for an evening meal. Everyone has a turn to cook and we gather at one of the houses. If we feel like some action there's the option of visiting Plett, but usually we're happy to stay put with our usual games. ■

Follow Wouter Kellerman on Twitter @wouterkellerman or visit his website www.wouterkellerman.com



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